RENEWING INTERIORITY IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CONSIDERING

SUBJECTIVITY AND INTERSUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the

School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Richard Andrew Wallace

May 1989

This dissertation, written by

Richard Andrew Wallace

under the direction of_____Faculty Committee,
and approved by its members, has been presented
to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of
Theology at Claremont in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Faculty Committee

_____
Chairman

_____

_____

_____

Date _April 18, 1989_   _Allen J. Moore_

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Abstract

Renewing Interiority in Religious Education Considering

Subjectivity and Intersubjective Experience

Richard Andrew Wallace

Tendencies in popular thinking and emphases in modern religious

education have led to the suppression or neglect of interiority. This

has occurred in theory that represents formulations based on an existing

conceptual framework, or out of a concern to present conceptualizations

that can be scientifically validated. The models of Ellis Nelson and

James Fowler are critiqued on these bases. An alternative approach to

religious education is based on experience of the concrete world, and

that accepts subjectivity in the reflection upon experience. It is

concerned with personal meanings. These issues are the concern of

Chapter 1. The approach to interiority through personal meanings is

based on the work of Ross Snyder. This theme has been his concern over

an extended period, and he has considered it in relation to children,

youth and adults.

In order to describe the emergence of personal meanings the

thinking of existentialism and phenomenology is utilized. This

description employs themes from Kierkegaard, Sartre, Heidegger, Marcel,

Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty. The manner of the individual's insertion

into the world, the mind-body relationship, and intersubjectivity in

relation to meanings are presented in Chapters 2 and 3.

Meanings are related to value and, ultimately, to God. The non-

theist positions of some existentialist and phenomenological thinkers is

rejected. An epistemology based on the thought of Gabriel Marcel advances the discussion of meanings and God. This also provides a starting point for a consideration of the ethics of meanings. These issues comprise the content of Chapter 4.

Ross Snyder's Meaning Formation Workshop is described in Chapter 5. It is concerned with the uncovering and enhancement of meanings for adults. An analysis of this workshop includes an overview of his sources, and an evaluation by persons who have participated in it. The final chapter adapts Snyder's workshop to a practice of interiority that develops personal meanings and places them in dialogue with Biblical texts for their further enhancement. Finally, a style of thinking is encouraged that maintains interiority and resists the tendencies to suppress it.
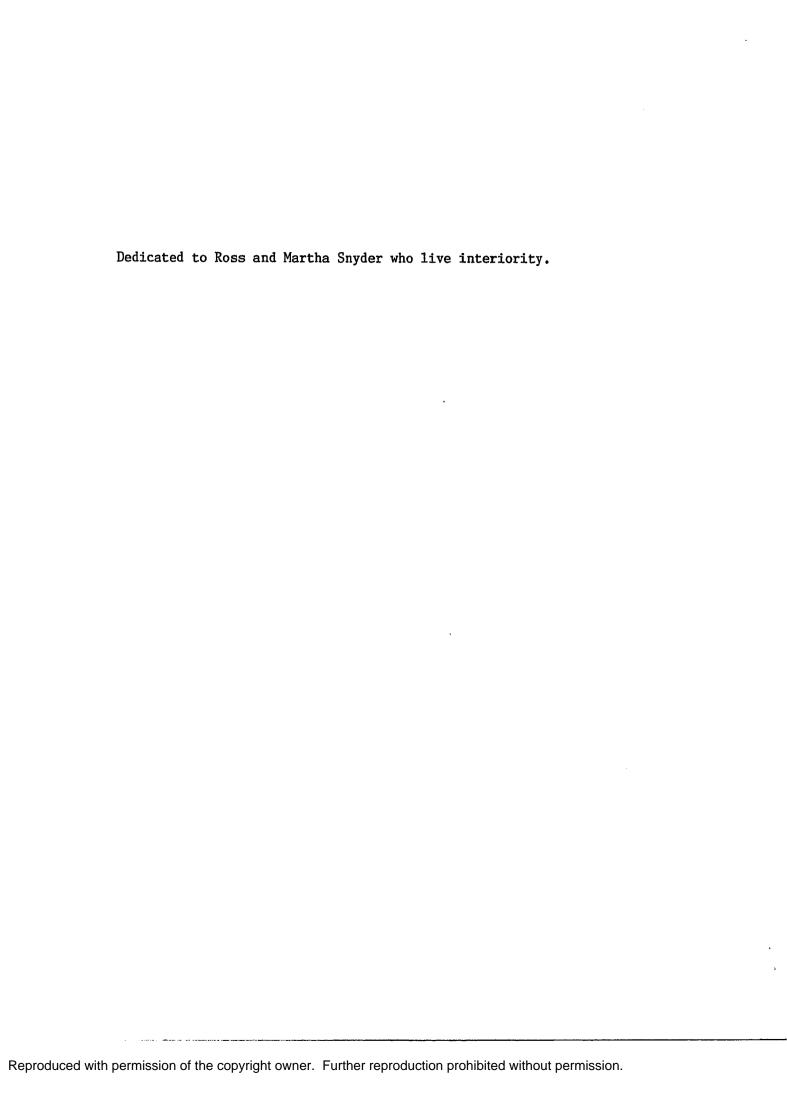
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Dedicated to Ross and Martha Snyder who live interiority.

CHAPTER 1

The Loss of Interiority: A New Beginning

Introduction

This work is concerned with the interior aspects of human experience. It seeks to focus upon inwardness in a way that is aimed at the restoration of thoughtful reflection upon experience of the world. Some strands of the tradition of spirituality in the Christian church have tended to call for withdrawal from the world. The interiority which is here being advanced calls for a person to be part of the world. It is to be grounded in the world as it is lived, though it moves beyond the world in its more developed forms.

In part, at least, this attempt to redirect attention toward spirituality is prophetic. The contemporary world is often satisfied with shallowness of thought, and with those styles of thinking which abstract important elements of experience. Thus, a fresh way to renew interiority is being sought which will stand over against these tendencies.

Before going further it will be helpful to introduce the main argument to be advanced. There are five theses which are proposed in this work. These theses and their elaboration comprise the substance of the dissertation. The first is that <u>interiority has been neglected</u>. This neglect is manifest both in modern popular culture, and in the field of religious education. The second thesis is that a key to the

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renewal of interiority is through meanings formation. This thesis
proposes that as persons work on the meanings that are present in their
lives their interior life is made manifest. The next two theses follow
from the second. The third thesis is that the process of meanings
formation can be described. Although the formation of personal meanings
is a complex and dynamic process, a description, based on available
philosophical insights, is possible. The fourth thesis advances that
meanings formation has theological amplitude, and generates a viable
ethical response. The final thesis is that a practice and maintenance
of the interior life is possible. An outline for the practice of
interiority will be proposed as part of this work.

Each of these theses are now elaborated by way of introduction to the
body of the argument. The proposal that interiority has been neglected
will be supported by an analysis of a dominant world view. It is argued
that the rise to dominance of a scientific view of the world,
materialist for popular culture, and empirical in science, has
influenced the neglect. The cost of the technological advances of the
modern world has been the loss, or at least neglect, of the interior
life. Of particular significance is the neglect of inwardness by
influential theorists of religious education. Two major theorists will
be considered. A summary and evaluation of their work is presented and
a critique offered that makes an argument concerning the manner in which
their work has supported the neglect of an interiority based on personal
experience. An alternative approach to religious education, based on
meanings formation, will be proposed. These arguments will comprise the

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substantial part of the first chapter following this introduction.

The notion of personal meanings is presented as a key to the renewal of interiority. This is the second thesis. A helpful impetus is given to this proposal by the work of the religious educator, Ross Snyder. In particular, his concern for the formation, and functions of, personal meanings in human experience provide a foundation for this approach to interiority. Meanings do not commence with ideas in the mind, but originate in the world as it is experienced. Therefore, the nature of this inwardness does not develop from a point detached from the world of common experience, but rather, has its genesis in the concrete world.

The task of getting at interiority is especially advanced by a consideration of Snyder's Meaning Formation Workshop. This workshop marks the most mature work of Snyder on meanings and embodies an existentialist approach to religious education. Snyder's academic interest in this direction of thinking was quickened and developed by his graduate study at Teachers College, Columbia University. His own particular emphases were worked out during his time as Professor of Religious Education at Chicago Theological Seminary from 1941 to 1977. The Meanings Unit was developed during Snyder's teaching years as visiting professor at San Francisco Theological Seminary from 1977 to 1982.

While this work will give special place to the Meanings Unit, Snyder's broader thinking on meanings spanned more than 20 years,[1] and meanings, or themes supportive of his work on meanings, was worked out

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with reference to children, youth, and adults. His Meanings Formation
Workshop was concerned with adults in the last third of life. The theme
of meanings formation is introduced in the first chapter, and the
description of the Meanings Formation workshop, as a model for the
practice of interiority is the major concern of chapter 5.

Part of the effort to call for a new look at interiority is to give
a description of the way in which personal meanings emerge. This
concerns the third thesis, namely that it is possible to describe the
process of meanings formation. The description looks to strands within
philosophy to provide the structure for this discussion. Most helpful
are certain aspects of existentialist thinking and that of some of the
phenomenologists of the twentieth century. These provide the support
for this description as far as they take seriously the individual as
existing, and carry out their reflection upon the world as it is
experienced. Thus, although Snyder's insight into the emergence of
personal meanings is a key in the argument for renewing interiority, his
observations and conclusions are expanded by a thorough description of
the development of meaning in the life of persons. Chapters 2 and 3 are
principally concerned with the description of the emergence of personal
meanings. Aspects of this task also carry into the ensuing chapter.

Reference to existentialism has been made above, therefore, before
passing on, it is necessary to define what is meant by this term as it
is employed in this description of meaning formation and interiority.
Each person will bring his or her own understanding of this term to a
reading of this proposal, thus it will be useful to provide a framework

for its usage. This approach is existentialist in so far as it embodies the following characteristics. First, it is a description which includes the individual as existing. Many modes of description, analysis, reflection and theory building propose a system of thought which is external to the individual. It is as though the individual as existing is largely forgotten. Therefore, subjectivity as an aspect of existentialist thought is acknowledged. Secondly, existentialism stands for reflection upon the concrete world, upon the world as it is lived. Thirdly, existentialism, as espoused here, is non-systematic. This characteristic follows from the second, and is the consequence of reflection upon lived experience.

To avoid misunderstanding it must also be noted that those reflections, often coming from thinkers who are regarded as existentialists, which deny the existence of God, are themselves rejected. On the contrary the theological aspects of meaning formation, and the restoration of interiority will be elaborated. The experience of God, therefore, is to be affirmed.

Thus, the theological implications of these meanings are significant, and they demand attention. The fourth thesis attests to the theological and ethical perspectives of meanings formation. The human experience of fullness of life, and conversely, the emptiness that is introduced into life by the reduction of persons to functions, point to the experience of being. Using Gabriel Marcel's thought, and its development, these experiences are linked to the existence of God. The experience of God as a part of meanings in human experience is

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associated with value. Therefore, the fourth chapter, while considering the theological aspects of meanings formation, also suggests that meanings imbue a strong ethical perspective to life. A key to this ethic is the support of the personal elements of life, in opposition to those aspects of the world that are dehumanizing.

The fifth thesis which is presented affirms the possibility of the renewal of the practice and maintenance of the interior life. The description of the emergence of meanings, although important, is limited. Renewing interiority, faced with trends which tend to suppress or neglect it, also depends on the establishment, and maintenance, of a style of living and thinking that will sustain it. This, perhaps, marks the greater task of restoring interiority. An attempt will be made to address this challenge. The approach outlined in the final chapter will be concerned with the formation and enhancement of meanings in the context of a group. It will also be concerned to hold these meanings in dialogue with Biblical texts. Taken together these are the issues that are to be engaged in the attempt to renew spirituality based on personal meanings.

This concludes these prefatory remarks which provide a rationale for the present work and an introduction to Ross Snyder whose work offers direction to the present endeavor. The first task now will be to argue the manner in which interiority has been suppressed.

The Neglect of Interiority

The foregoing introductory remarks suggest that the concern for interiority is based on a perceived need. This is, indeed, what is

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being affirmed. Interiority, or spirituality has had to survive forces which have tended to squeeze it out of human life. Interiority has been neglected by modern society. What follows offers an explanation for this need or lack.

To commence it may be useful to explain what is meant by "interiority." By interiority here is meant the reflection upon one's own concrete, lived experience in its plenitude, and yielding personal meanings. Interiority is a mode of consciousness aimed at the sensed significance of situations and events. It is rooted in the world of human experience and reaches beyond the mere physicality of objects presented to it. Interiority has to do with the relationship of certain events to a life.

In western culture the neglect of interiority has been influenced by the widespread acceptance, often passive, of realism as a world view. For popular culture this is mostly a naive realism. In modern philosophy realism "is used for the view that material objects exist externally to us, and independently of our sense experience."[3] Realism as a philosophy came to prominence in modern times in opposition to idealism which had dominated the nineteenth century. G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell were its proponents in Great Britain, and William James in the United States. Realism stands in opposition to idealism "which holds that no such material objects or external realities exist apart from our knowledge or consciousness of them."[4] The kind of naive realism that prevails in modern culture supposes that various expanses of color, given through vision, are surfaces of material objects, and

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that sounds may be heard accompanying these visual sensations. These
are supposed to come from those objects. For example, when I feel
something hard and smooth I assume it to be the top of my desk. The
realism which marks the thinking of many people proposes that these
suppositions concerning shape, color, sound and texture of expanses are
the actual properties of material objects. The prevalence of this
attitude means that elements beyond the physicality of phenomena tend to
be neglected. Reality tends to be identified with the physical matter
of the object presented to perception. In a general way this material
view blocks the development of interiority, since it is dismissed or not
considered of value.

Science and the Loss

This view is so widespread that any other view seems alien and
wrong. The rise of realism is associated with the rise to dominance of
the scientific method as a procedure of the analysis of phenomena.
Although the term "scientific method" may be applied to a wide variety
of research methods directed towards such diverse purposes as the
taxonomy of insects or the search for a cure to cancer, it can be
summarized as, "fidelity to empirical evidence and simplicity of logical
formulation, fidelity to the evidence taking precedence in cases of
conflict."[5] In general this demands a clear statement of the problem
which is to be studied, empirical study of the relevant evidence, a
formulation of a theory that takes into account the evidence, testing,
and review of the theory in the light of evidence. An inalienable
aspect of the scientific method is the collection of sense data. What

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is observable, or made observable, by various instruments or specialized
techniques designed to eliminate known errors or misperceptions,
discloses reality.

Living in a world so dominated by the scientific view, persons
place value on objects and the ability to manipulate them. Quantifiable
results become the measure of success of business enterprises.
Techniques to achieve these results are highly valued. On the other
hand, persons are used to execute and fulfill the requirements demanded
by the technique, and so, they too, tend to be viewed as objects.
The loss of interiority has not gone unnoticed. Poet T. S. Eliot writes
of "The Hollow Men":

> We are the hollow men
> We are the stuffed men
> Leaning together
> Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
> Our dried voices, when
> We whisper together
> Are quiet and meaningless
> As wind in dry grass
> Or rats' feet over broken glass
> In our dry cellar
>
> Shape without form, shade without colour,
> Paralysed force, gesture without motion;6

Eliot was sensitive to the emptiness of modern life, and saw what

profound results it would have on humanity when he wrote:

> This is the way the world ends
> This is the way the world ends
> This is the way the world ends
> Not with a bang but a whimper.7

The interiority that becomes neglected through technocracy is the

personal aspects of human existence. This is not to ignore the value of

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the achievements of the scientific method when applied to many human enterprises, but what is highlighted is the fact that the scientific method closes off the personal elements of existence, that is subjectivity.

The rise of science has influenced modern culture in two ways to suppress interiority. The first is through the emphasis on objective reality. Objects are studied, weighed measured, analyzed and used by science for production of certain results. The research and development achieved by science has given the impression of bringing progress to humanity. Certainly, there have been great advances in communication, transportation, medicine, agriculture and other fields of scientific endeavor. One of the results has been that modern society looks to science, with its successful, objective methods to deal with the problems that the world faces. In this rise to power that science has enjoyed, subjectivity has been held in low esteem. The scientist who intrudes himself into his research produces unreliable, questionable results and his work is discredited. Subjectivity is, therefore, regarded with great suspicion, and for modern culture it is considered inappropriate to serious research. At the same time, it should be recognized that it is impossible to eradicate all subjectivity, since the choice of subject matter, and methods are in the hands of the scientist, and the hand or eye that measures the material object belongs to the scientist. His judgment cannot be totally detached from the work.

However, the distrust of subjectivity, supported by a confusion

between subjectivism and subjectivity, constitutes a prominent attitude. Thus, a modern culture that places value on external, material things and discredits the internal perspective, leads to a neglect of interiority. Interiority grows out of the totality of experience, not merely from the objective aspects. Thus, too often the human elements of experience are lost.

Secondly, the regard in which science is held tends to suppress interiority through its capacity to open up great regions of knowledge that are not grounded in personal experience. The child's experience for its first few years of life is predominantly lived experience. Its knowledge, and it does have a considerable amount of knowledge, is based on what it has lived in the real world. As formal education commences, and then continues to advance, the person's world of knowledge is transformed. Knowledge, outside of personal experience rapidly expands. This is book knowledge, abstract and conceptual. The grasp of knowledge from lived experience is weakened and greater authority is attributed to that gained from the world of books. By the high school years a person may learn the composition of the moon's soil, the atmosphere of Mars, and be able to tell that, "color is a visual sensation normally produced when electromagnetic waves stimulate the retina."[8] Science has vastly expanded the world of knowledge, and the greater part beyond the world of lived experience. We know a great deal more than we have experienced. Society tends to reward the accumulation of this knowledge, by recognition, awards and scholarships. It does of course have its place, but it discourages interiority because it passes

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the person directly into a conceptual world, skirting lived experience. Of course, lived experience may not be able to relate to many of the subjects discussed. The accumulation of conceptual knowledge at the cost of a loss of interiority is again uplifted by Eliot in "Choruses from 'The Rock'":

> The endless cycle of idea and action,
> Endless invention, endless experiment,
> Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
> Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;
> Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.
> All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,
> All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,
> But nearness to death no nearer to GOD.
> Where is the Life we have lost in living?
> Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
> Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?[9]

There is a deeper concern here than that of a world view which tends to suppress interiority. It is one that involves the educative function of the church, for the rise of the processes which have accompanied the neglect of interiority have also been present in the field of religious education. This is the specific concern to which attention is now given.

In its efforts to present theoretical formulations concerning development and learning of faith in individuals or groups, religious education has adopted methods and techniques from the social sciences to investigate religious experience. These techniques have laid stress on objective study using carefully designed measuring instruments, and other techniques to preclude subjective evaluations and so ensure the validity of studies thus undertaken.[10] The other technique has been to take an idea from the conceptual realm, and work it out in terms of

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religious education. Two fields of social science that have provided useful insights for religious educators are anthropology and developmental psychology.

Ellis Nelson and Interiority

C. Ellis Nelson, a prominent theorist in religious education, brings anthropology and its insights to bear on the task of religious education. It is an innovative approach offering valuable insight. His work is worthy of attention, and has influenced other religious educators.

He is clear about his approach to religious education. Speaking of cultural anthropologists and other social scientists' qualitative as well as quantitative research methods, he notes:

> From these social scientists we can find some clues
> to the way a culture communicates its values to
> children. They do not attempt to formulate a theory
> about the communication of Christian faith; but their
> work gives us important clues to how culture is
> communicated from one generation to another and how
> a person internalizes the attitudes, thought patterns,
> and perceptive system of a culture.[11]

Thus Nelson accepts the Christian community as a culture, and that the group plays a very salutary role in faith development. He suggests that the religious educator may pay attention to what the anthropologist has discovered, and so argues "that the unit of reality with which we must work in order to understand a process of faith-communication is the group to which a person belongs."[12]

Therefore, faith in the context of community, as a particular kind of culture, is handed down and learned as a group experience. It draws on its traditions and rituals, and stimulates personal interaction and

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reflection on life experiences. To preface his work he states:

> My thesis is that faith is communicated by a community
> of believers and that the meaning of faith is developed
> by its members out of their history, by their
> interaction with each other, and in relation to the
> events that take place in their lives.13

Following the view of anthropology, he affirms that the process of
faith formation is one of socialization or acculturation. Clearly
Nelson considers that the Christian person is a product of his/her
special culture. The Christian faith is communicated in this cultural
milieu through various channels including the mind, experience, self-
hood and the church.

Nelson supports his argument by affirming the formative power
of culture.[14] For him, culture is the way of life of a society, a
guide to the way an individual should act in a diversity of
circumstances. The interrelated aspects of the culture include the
culture itself, society, and the individual. He describes culture as an
enduring reality which functions to form self-hood, teach the
individual, and define the goals and methods of society. Further, the
content of culture's communication embraces the world view and values of
that culture.

Training in a culture occurs by its ability to fix an
individual's perceptive system.[15] This takes place predominantly through
language, by a system of rewards and punishments, and by the
individual's self-identification within the culture.

Nelson then proceeds to show how a religious tradition acts as a
culture in forming an individual. Through the reality of the church as

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a traditioning community, faith is awakened. Faith functions to create expectancy of how God is active in the world, as a provider of meaning, and relates meaning to events. In the community of believers, adult groups form and reform their style of life to which each individual is related. Within these groups the values that are communicated are appraised through Biblical interpretation. Thus the manner in which the symbols of the faith are related to life provide the basis of evaluation for the quality of the community's life.

Nelson affirms the centrality of the local congregation for the task of communicating faith. He believes that faith is fostered within the group of believers, and that this is the Biblical view of faith formation. The congregation exists as an interpreting community, and sees itself as living in a stream of interpreted history. Its tasks include the development of critical intelligence through study groups, training of leadership and attention to its curriculum. This is the community's deliberate words and actions in all kinds of specific events, and the quality of its corporate life. The faith community is also required to receive its role as forming the thinking style of its members.[16]

Nelson's proposals concerning religious education will be characterized as an enculteration model. By the term model, most simply stated, is meant a system or set of presuppositions. For Nelson the presuppositions are those concepts which are held to apply to human cultures are also present in the Christian church. This development differs from the interiority approach, which will be elaborated later,

since the latter involves reflection upon the world as it is lived. The description of lived experience does not proceed from a set of assumptions, since the lived world is prior to any presupposition. However, Nelson's enculturation model offers a powerful conceptualization concerning the task of religious education. It challenges practice within the church and raises, not for the first time perhaps, but from its particular perspective, pertinent questions. These include the role of children in the church, and the educative influence of practices that are not purposefully related to the faith. What is done in the local congregation has an influence, but the question is, "Do the practices of the local congregation teach what it consciously wants to teach?" Nelson's work brings this question into sharp focus. He is concerned that the process of religious enculturation be reflective and deliberate so that all thought and practice exercised within the faith community assist in fulfilling the task of communicating the faith.

Nelson is also aware that faith formation is more than undirected socialization. He stresses the need for the church to be about an educative task that maintains a prophetic stance, is dynamic and creative in its own life and in interaction with wider society.

Nelson's work has had an important influence on the theory of religious education. In as much as this is so, the values, and the weaknesses of his work are maintained. The influence that Nelson has had is shown in the work of John Westerhoff III. In part, he too, relies upon the enculturation model. In Will Our Children Have Faith?

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Westerhoff affirms that learning the Christian faith, and faith development, cannot be separated from the group or community. Further, he asserts that it is the community which exercises a teaching function.[17] By living in a community which practises certain rituals, uses a certain language, and maintains a certain mythology an individual learns, or, is enculturated into the faith. Westerhoff is then concerned to rediscover the community necessary for such faith enculturation.

In this concern for the future of faith in the Christian community Westerhoff acknowledges the influence Nelson has had upon his own thinking. He offers this quotation from Nelson to precede his third chapter, "In Search of Community":

> faith is communicated by a community of believers and the meaning of faith is developed by its members out of their history, by their interaction with each other, and in relation to the events that take place in their lives.[18]

The enculturation or socialization model also lies at the foundation of another work co-written by Westerhoff. <u>Liturgy and Learning Through The Life-Cycle</u> encourages the church to view ritual, including the sacraments as important aspects of communicating the faith.[19] They are to be celebrated and utilized in such a way that they support other activities which inculcate values, support a world view, or "fix the perceptive system" as Nelson puts it. Not only are existing rituals to fulfill this function, but congregations are encouraged to generate rituals for stages of the life-cycle, including transitions which persons make in the course of their lives. Thus not

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only marriage, but divorce too, may be recognized within the life of the church, according to the authors. The manner in which rituals and sacraments act as vessels for faith formation on this enculturation model is one in which the whole congregation should participate.

The authors of this work do not mention Nelson's work, and so there is no direct link to trace. What is salutary, however, is the manner in which the enculturation model is given continuity by this work even though the linkage to Nelson is indirect.

One of Westerhoff's concerns has been to revive catechesis as a means of religious education. Something of his understanding of catechesis is included in his contributions to <u>A Faithful Church</u>. There, catechesis is characterized as the "process content of the Christian faith."[20] He understands this as concerned with "how" questions, including the manner in which faith is "acquired, enhanced and enlivened."[21] Already he has referred to the socialization process of religious education as a form of catechesis. This note is intensified as Westerhoff states:

> Catechesis is the symbolic, interactive, dialectical
> process (not technique) of enculturation and accultur-
> ation. Catechesis is addressed within a living, learning,
> worshipping, witnessing community of faith.[22]

This process is then described as life long. It is a pilgrimage. This parallels the enculturation/socialization process, although Nelson's work is not mentioned. Thus there is no acknowledged direct link, and the attempt to suggest implicit connections between this work and Nelson appears speculative. However, it is hard to escape a sense of continuity, beginning with Westerhoff's acknowledged use of Nelson.

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From there the themes of acculturation and socialization are carried through the concerns that follow in Westerhoff's thinking. These include the use of liturgy as an educational tool, and the hope of renewal of catechesis in the life of the church. The continuity of the model in the work of the one educator does attest to the broad influence of the model, and influence, originating with Nelson's seminal work.

The broad critique of recent models for religious education included here is that they have encouraged the kind of thinking and practice which have tended to stifle rather than nurture interiority. Attention is now turned to manner in which Nelson's work directs attention away from interiority.

The central critique of Nelson that is leveled here concerns the way in which he proceeds to develop his theory of religious education. It is a critique of his beginning place, of the nature of his basic assumption on which everything else follows. Nelson commences his work by offering a conceptual model detached from the concrete world of his own experience. Explaining how he is going to proceed, he states:

> From my study of cultural anthropology and sociology, I discerned that what these social scientists were describing as the socializing process (or acculturation process) was the process by which faith and its meaning was transmitted by a community of believers.23

The picture that is given of Nelson's method is that of his reading texts on the work of certain social scientists and receiving an intuition concerning the nature of faith communication. His insight is based on book knowledge. This term is not used in a derogatory fashion, but rather to distinguish conceptual knowledge from lived experience.

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Everyone who has had some schooling has such book knowledge, and knows

much more than he/she has experienced. This is his take-off point, and

is not related to the lived experience of his own faith. He continues

his basic thesis explaining:

> This led me to see that the socializing process was a natural
> phenomenon in Biblical times as well as today. Therefore by
> using the analytical methods of the social scientists who
> study human communities we could see how this process operated
> and use it.24

His beginning place is clear, it is a concept or a cluster of concepts

gathered into one model. Collectively the concepts are labeled

"socializing process," and, individually include "Formative Power of

Culture,"25 and language and the "perceptive system."26 This concept

cluster is intended to become a tool, a technique to be used in the task

of communicating faith.

Nelson proceeds then, begins in fact, by way of abstraction. His

conceptual model is broken away from, abstracted from, his lived

experience. It is this approach that ignores interiority. Abstraction,

the taking out of lived experience a thought or idea is prominent in

this type of approach. The reasons for abstraction as a methodological

tool, the way in which abstraction occurs, and its results require

special attention. The philosopher Gabriel Marcel's thinking provides a

suitable framework for this discussion.

<div align="center">The Place of Abstraction</div>

Gabriel Marcel is indeed a philosopher concerned with abstraction

and its prevalence in the modern world. Although deeply concerned about

the results of abstraction upon thought and behavior Marcel recognizes

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that abstraction is necessary and states, "Abstraction, as such is a mental operation to which we must have recourse if we are seeking to achieve a determinate purpose of any sort."[27]

What Marcel does is to distinguish between what he calls the "notion of abstraction," and the "spirit of abstraction."[28] He contends that the notion of abstraction clears the way for useful conclusions about experience and the achievement of certain purposes. Thus it is a methodological procedure. Therefore, in working through to a certain end specific omissions of some data are permitted as part of the method, but at each step of the way it must never be forgotten that the abstract situation is not the real situation. The error that entraps a person is to allow the preconditions that permit abstraction to become obscured, and the abstract world becomes the real world. In this respect Marcel affirms:

> the mind, yielding to a sort of fascination, ceases to be
> aware of these prior conditions that justify abstraction and
> deceives itself about the nature of what is, in itself,
> nothing more than a method. . . . The spirit of abstraction
> is not separable from this contempt for the concrete
> conditions of abstract thinking.[29]

Marcel perceives the prevalence of this spirit of abstraction, based on its faulty method, in the world. He calls it the "transposition of the attitudes of imperialism to the mental plane."[30] It is particularly noticeable in the use of language, where it is manifest in reductionism. Faced with a complex of human experience the knot of complexity is cut with the announcement, "This is just so and so. . . ." Marcel is concerned about the emptiness of words, and the

spirit of abstraction when he declares:

> Such words as <u>liberty, person, democracy</u>, are being more and
> more lavishly used, and are becoming slogans, in a world in
> which they are tending more and more to lose their authentic
> significance.31

Nelson participates in this tendency toward a fascination with
abstraction as he starts out his formulation with a conceptual model.
This kind of abstraction is also linked to the realist world and its
interest in objective study and the scientific method in another way.

It is one of the propensities of this world to favor the use of
models in the study of objective entities. Physicists construct solid
models of atoms to explain their studies, and microbiologists give
models for the DNA molecules. The opthalmologist has a model of the
human eye in plastic cut away configuration revealing all the parts of
the eye. The line of thought that directs this tendency is generative
also of the discovery of conceptual models in the social sciences. The
"stage" model of structuralists in human development,[32] and the
"epigenetic" model of Erik Erikson[33] are two of the influential
conceptual models in developmental psychology. These have been of great
value, and, as conceptualizations, have behind them much meticulous and
painstaking research. They are not to be disparaged. But there is a
difference between these and Nelson's model in terms of the manner in
which they are derived. He takes his as the springboard for his
observations.

The value of Nelson's work has been recognized, but it directs
attention away from interiority. The way his model works to suppress
interiority is that it passes too quickly, indeed immediately, to the

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realm of abstract thought, the kind of thought that is gained from book study, and not from lived experience. Thus, the ground of interiority, one's own experience prior to scientific or theoretical conceptualizations, is cut off, or left out.

A further danger of the kind of abstraction that yields models for human behavior is that the individual, the person, tends to be seen in terms of the model. The model becomes a technique for organizing persons' behavior, understanding motivation and action. Nelson therefore portrays faith communication in terms of his own model and the person is treated as a kind of historical constant, or even historical nonentity. It does not matter about his or her own unique experience of the world, intuitions, or graspings. These very human and personal factors are made insignificant and tend to be swallowed by the process. The process becomes the point, and not the person. These are critical issues raised as challenges in consideration of Nelson's work. Although the development of interiority was not his major concern, his work shares in those tendencies of thought in the modern era that suppress interiority. To renew it will require a fresh focus on concrete experience as the starting point for reflection, and include those personal elements that conceptualization tends to discard. Another type of approach that tends to neglect interiority is now considered. Attention is now given to religious education theory based on the developmental psychology perspective.

James Fowler and Interiority

In the field of cognitive development and religious education James

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Fowler has been the most influential figure. His theory has been

influenced by scholars concerned with cognitive development,

and Fowler recognizes their impact on his own thinking. These

include the structuralists, Piaget, Kohlberg and Erikson. All three may

be generally refered to as "stage theorists," in that they describe human

development in terms of stages through which persons develop. Piaget

and Kohlberg are interested in cognitive development, or the development

of reasoning processes, and Erikson describes psycho-social development.

A discussion of Piaget's theory defines the characteristics of a stage

theory of cognitive development in this manner:

> people develop through the stage system in an <u>invariant</u>
> <u>sequence</u> and that no stages are skipped. He [Piaget] also
> maintains that there is no movement backward through the
> stages. Each stage builds upon the abilities of the previous
> stage. This is the principle of <u>hierarchical integration</u>
> . . . each stage is comprehensive enough to help interpret all
> reality and all of life's experiences. Thus, each stage is
> viewed as a <u>structured whole</u> . . . each stage represents a
> <u>qualitatively different</u> way of structuring the world.34

These qualities define the stage theory of Piaget, and also that of

Kohlberg. Erikson's theory also suggests certain stages. All are

potentially present in the individual at any one time, but the stages

have a specific time for ascension. When this occurs development takes

place in the proper fashion. The ascendency of a stage and the

resolution of the developmental task of that stage marks psycho-social,
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not specifically cognitive, development.

Fowler attributes great value to the work of these theorists,

recognizing the varying emphases of each. He suggests that the insights

of each may be modified by the others. Having brought these three

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figures into dialogue he notes:

> persons' ways of meeting and dealing with the
> developmental crises Erikson delineates may differ
> in significant ways, depending upon their operative
> stages of cognitive and moral judgment development.36

For Fowler the relationship between the cognitive development of Piaget,
Kohlberg's moral development and Erikson's psycho-social development is
dynamic and interactive. A view of development based on just one of
these views is not sufficient.

Equipped with the insights and tools of these stage theorists,
Fowler, along with his associates, interviewed 359 persons over a nine-
year period. The interview was divided into four major sections. These
were Life Review, Life Shaping Experiences and Relationships, Present
Values and Commitments, and Religion.[37] The responses to the
questions comprising the four sections were analyzed with the result
that Fowler claimed to have discovered six stages of religious
development, and in addition, a pre-stage of Infancy and
Undifferentiated Faith. According to Fowler, certain developments with
regard to cognitive and psycho-social development precipitate the
transition from one stage to another. He has called the stages of faith
Intuitive-Projective, Mythic-Literal, Synthetic-Conventional,
Individuative-Reflective, Conjunctive Faith and Universalizing Faith.

In the first stage the individual manifests a great deal of
imaginative work, unifying the experience of the world through certain
images. These intuitively form the child's understanding of existence.
Thought patterns are fluid. The images and feelings formed at this

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stage are enduring. They will be ordered through the reflective and valuing capabilities of a later stage. As concrete operations emerge and Oedipal issues resolved, the transition is made to Mythic-Literal faith. At this point, narrative, drama, and myth emerge as the factors by which experience is ordered. The individual appropriates the stories and symbols of the community. However, they are given a primitive, concrete meaning. The child at this stage takes them quite literally, but as this concrete understanding of faith is no longer experienced as adequate, the transition to the third stage occurs.

Stage three is typically an adolescent experience according to Fowler.38 The individual has moved to the Piagetian stage of formal operations. His/her world has vastly expanded to include a wider community to the extent of a world community. Identity is formed around the values and expectations of other people. No firm, self-constructed identity has yet formed. Although a belief system is held by a person, he or she may not be fully conscious of it. Traditional authorities are accepted, or in some instances, authority is recognized as residing in a personal group with shared values. Fowler sees these as characteristics of a stage in faith formation. He calls it Synthetic-Traditional faith. Transition from this stage is marked by perceived increasing conflicts between the value systems which have been accepted. Expressions of physical and emotional independence may accompany this move to the ensuing fourth stage.

This stage of Individuative-Reflective faith is one in which the person begins to consciously stand for what he or she believes.

Responsibility for the belief system, and commitment to claimed attitudes is manifest in this late adolescent or adult stage of development. One characteristic of the developmental tasks of this stage is the recognition and ability to deal with certain conflicts, such as that between individual and community and between intuition and strong personal feelings as contrasted with a concern for a more critical reflection. At this stage identity is no longer solely described in terms of other people and their values and attitudes, but rather becomes more distinctly differentiated. Fowler notes that the self "expresses its intuitions of coherence in an ultimate environment in terms of an explicit system of meanings."[39] World view and self-identity are critically considered. Internal questioning concerning the self and world views of the individual mark the beginning of a move to the next stage. Symbols from traditions and beliefs external to the person's own begin to question the settled faith of the individual. Past images and disillusionment concerning the directions of life help move the individual on to Conjunctive Faith, the fifth stage.

Attention to those elements of self-identity and ideology which had suffered from the need to form a conventional faith of an earlier stage is part of the task of this penultimate stage of faith development. A reentry to the past and a working over the earlier meanings of events also occurs. A more advanced capacity for critical reflection related to issues of justice and truth has developed. There is a deep concern over the divisions of humanity and a striving for a more inclusive view of reality. This stage is not free from tension and conflict, however,

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as the individual deals with the need to participate in activities and
reflection which help define his/her individuality while striving for
greater unity and harmony of a universal humanity. The individual is
aware of the ambiguities of present systems, but feels that he or she
must work within them because no better alternatives are available.
While the individual at this stage is committed to his/her value system
there is awareness of the partial truth of this view. Further
commitment to values is liberated from parochial or sectarian concerns.
Fowler contends that, "The transition to Stage 6 involves an overcoming
of this paradox through a moral and ascetic actualization of the
universalizing apprehensions."[40]

Persons attaining stage six, Universalizing Faith, are very rare
according to Fowler.[41] At this stage there is the realization that
ultimate reality is wholly inclusive of all being. Examples of persons
who reflect this stage of development include such persons as Gandhi,
Bonhoeffer and Thomas Merton, among others.[42] These persons tend to
oppose structures that maintain narrow, restrictive or oppressive
attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Not often appreciated during their
lives, they tend to be more honored after death. These persons are open
to reality at any moment to enter into immediate communication with
others, even those of different traditions.

The phenomenon of conversion demands careful consideration in a
stage theory. Obviously the experience of conversion does occur, and
the challenge is to reconcile it to a stage developmental model. For
Fowler conversion focuses on the content of the faith. These include

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central stories, symbols and doctrines, "centers of value" and "images
of power."[43] Conversion therefore concerns the changing of these contents
of faith, and is thus marked by adoption of new centers of value and
central stories. Fowler discusses the possibilities of this change of
content occurring without a new structuring of cognitive patterns, that
is a new stage, but also finds evidence for the changes of conversion
inducing or accompanying a change of stage in faith development.[44]

Fowler's discussion of the phenomena of conversion in a stage
theory context is thoughtful, and it deals with the complexities of the
situation adequately. He does not satisfy himself with simplistic
explanations, but strives to account for the variety of data before him.
However it is the notion of conversion that contributes, along with
other considerations, to the abandonment of what might be called a
hard stage theory.

Fowler suggests that at conversion there is a "recapitulation" of
earlier stages of development.[45] The individual may rework certain
unresolved matters from any previous stage, be it of infancy, childhood,
youth or some other. This recapitulation may not necessarily occur in
an orderly way, and may be disposed to rework most recent prior to more
distant stages. The possibility of restructuring meanings and values
through such a process of recapitulation suggests an understanding of
more fluid stages, than for instance, does the Piagetian model.
Fowler's stages therefore, tend to be softer.

The life long quest for meanings, the actual life journey of a
person, is characterized by Fowler as a broadening spiral. The spiral

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not only has vertical development, but also a cycle of lateral development.[46] This signifies a movement from an undifferentiated, egocentric self to one of increasing differentiation and decentration to the attainment of the fourth stage, and a most marked return in the fifth and sixth stages as a more universalizing faith is acquired.

The value of Fowler's research and theory, though not unquestioned, has been widely recognized. Andrew Grannell lists six implications for religious education and pastoral ministry that come from Fowler's work.[47] Amongst these he notes that this research emphasizes that faith formation is an on-going and dynamic process. It is a questing for God that stretches over a life time. The understanding of the nature of God thus acquired becomes more comprehensive and generative of additional meanings for a life. Grannell also notes that Fowler offers a place for imagination and for passion. He also considers life as a great "adventure."[48] Life is the primary source of wisdom, and life experiences in their rich diversity or shallow monotony help determine the quality of that wisdom. These characteristics are seen as offering valuable insight into the process of faith formation.

There are a number of grounds on which Fowler's theory has been critiqued. It has been questioned whether there are, in fact, six clearly defined stages of faith development, and in particular, whether the sixth "rare" stage can be substantiated by data. Fowler's technique of interviewing persons about their own experiences has been said to rely too much on self reporting of questionable objectivity. Thus his research method has been brought into question with regard to the matter

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of control for factors introduced by self reporting.

What Fowler leaves open, and it is an issue that requires further research, is whether the stage development structure will stand up across cultural and religious boundaries. Kohlberg's structuralist approach to moral development has sought to address this issue by including cross cultural research, but it remains to be done in regard to faith formation.[49]

Faith development in the Christian tradition, and in other traditions too, has been closely linked to a community. The community nurtures faith as it keeps alive the stories and other symbols of the faith. The community is also a community of interpretation relating certain events and data to the lives of the believers. The stage model of faith development is primarily concerned with the individual, and the individual's stage of development. Thus this model tends not to take sufficient account of the communal nature of faith formation.

For the most part, these criticisms accept the assumptions on which the theory is built. It is a scientific model whereby basic data is gathered and subjected to analysis and interpretation according to instruments developed in the field of the social sciences. On this basis a theory is proposed, or an existing one modified in the light of the research. Many of the criticisms of Fowler's theory are based upon the correct application and practice of the instruments, or whether the data is appropriate to the selected instruments. That is, are the data directed toward the proper execution of the scientific method?

As noted previously this method produces certain valuable insights.

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But the criticism offered here is that it stifles or suppresses interiority. The data given through research, in the process of analysis, and the quest for universal structures discards the personal or subjective elements on which interiority is founded. This method is concerned to disentangle the objective from the subjective, personal elements to yield a strong, scientific formulation.

Fowler does indeed begin with reports from persons of their experiences, and which incorporate certain subjective elements, reflection and personal valuation. In the development of his theoretical model these are neglected for the objective, structural elements towards which, Fowler believes, they point.

The result of this formulation further discourages interiority in two ways. First, it sets up a structure or system which is external to the theorist or religious educator. The person as existing is forgotten. I am involved, I participate in life, and it is from that perspective of participation that spirituality may develop. Where a model or system is proposed that does not include the subject this involvement is lost. When it comes to considering myself in Fowler's stages, I am not sure that I fit neatly in any one of them. Somehow my interior life, my attitudes and values may be found in more than one stage. Moreover there may be a deep sense that it is not appropriate to "fit" a person in all his/her rich diversity as a person into a model, which is an abstraction from the fullness of life.

This leads to the second way in which this scientific model discourages interiority. It is oriented to the development of

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technique, that is the dealing with persons in purely an objective
manner. This often becomes a form of manipulation. Individuals are
seen to fall within a particular stage of development and the techniques
for education, communication, and generally relating, appropriate to
that stage are utilized. The features and qualities of the stage of
development become the focus and not the qualities of the person
participating in the teaching/learning process.

In outlining some of the values of his work for the Christian
community Fowler states:

> The faith stage model enables us to see the readiness
> and capacities of persons at each stage to be part
> of the covenant intended by their communities.
> Attention to the capacities of each stage help us
> avoid expecting too much too soon.50

This language implies the priority of stage, that is the
theoretical stage of development, over a focus upon the person. The
individual is considered, and understood, in terms of stage, an
objective quality which may or may not pertain, rather than as a
subject. Therefore, intersubjectivity in all its fullness, as
participation in an I-Thou relationship tends to be hindered in this
situation. It will be maintained in what follows that intersubjectivity
contributes significantly to interiority.

It must be asked whether this criticism of Fowler is truly valid.
If he is concerned with the formulation of a theory that has certain
assumptions, is it valid to critique his work because he fails to do
something that he does not intend to do? This critique is raised in the
context of a broader perspective than that of one theorist. Fowler is

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taken as a representative, and an influential one, of a direction in religious education, which, because of its methodology abstracts from the whole of human experience certain elements and neglects others. It is this neglect of the personal factors of experience which marks the broader concern for the direction of religious education. It points to the neglect of the interior life. The weight of the present critique therefore does not fall upon whether Fowler is wrong in some aspect or other, but whether there is another approach to faith formation.

A similar critique is made of the structuralist Kohlberg by religious educator Mary Elizabeth Moore. She calls for attention to the concrete world as the generative source of moral principles, rather than to assign it to two discrete realms of human activity, which she claims occurs in Kohlberg's formulation.[51] Recognizing that H. Richard Niebuhr and process theologians consider the contribution that both make in ethical decision making she affirms:

> they . . . recognize that moral action is one's response both to those concrete events and to that act of moral reasoning. These cannot be abstracted from each other. The events help shape one's cognitions, and one's cognitions help shape one's perception and response to events.[52]

Professor Moore also calls for a balance between experience and elements of reason. She perceives that Kohlberg places more emphasis on "the process of reasoning"[53] and does not place the same stress on experiential elements, but concerning cognitive–experiential aspects, argues, "the two dimensions are interrelated and cannot really be separated."[54] The broad critiques that Professor Moore makes are similar to those that are at the heart of this work. She makes her

critique from a Whiteheadian perspective, this work will propose
another.

Interiority and Meanings

What then, are the other options available? That is, what
theoretical formulation, and methodology, might overcome the neglect of
subjectivity, and so include both objective and subjective elements of
human experience? If such an option could be discovered the restoration
of interiority would become possible. The quest is, in part, for that
approach which restores subject and object in experience. It is not
possible to go back to a style of thinking prior to the subject/object
split. Although prereflective experience occurs, any analysis is in the
light of the subject/object split. Therefore the approach sought must
be restorative in nature.

Roger Shinn, who has written in religious education,[55] has also
shown concern for the way in which objective, scientific thinking
removes itself from subjectivity. In his work of interpreting
existentialism to the church he states, "Existentialism says that
persons discover some truth, not by cultivating objectivity, but by
entering into the intensity of personal experience."[56] He recognizes,
however, that his is not an existentialist work, rather, "it aims to
tell about existentialism."[57] In another place he is concerned to
express the existentialist themes in Biblical faith.[58] This too seeks
to interpret some of the themes of existentialism in terms of nineteenth-
and twentieth-century protestant theologians. Another possible hopeful
direction seems that of Chamberlin.[59] The approach that he apparently

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supports in his preface, that of the phenomonology of Husserl, Heidegger, and Ricoeur, however is not supported by the content. His work is rather based on a loose understanding of phenomenology, as a description of things themselves. While the phenomenology he claims will guide him is concerned with reflection upon pre-thematized lived experience he states his purpose is "a brief analysis of ten ranges of learning in terms of content, capacities, setting and processes."[60] Later discussing settings he intends to present them under "three formal headings," which include "scope," "quality" and "dynamics."[61] This is not a direction that can sustain a reflection in a pre-conceptual manner.

Amongst religious educators Lewis Sherrill is one who has maintained a concern for both the subjective and objective aspects of human experience.[62] Within the frame of the development of the self he has used some existentialist themes, such as self-alienation.[63] But in describing the self he follows not an indirect, reflective form but a normative, conceptual form as he outlines the "marks of a self."[64]

One other major option available to religious education, aside from the socialization or enculturation, cognitive development and other models, is that concerned primarily with the formation of meanings. This approach is focused on the development of meanings in life through human experience. It is inclusive of the subjective as well as the objective elements of that experience and is concerned with the experience of the world as it is lived.

The major proponent of meanings formation as an approach to

religious education is Ross Snyder. His insights and theoretical work will provide a significant point of reference for this work. His efforts include a theoretical base and methodology which point the way for the renewal of interiority. Adjunct to this source will be a description, philosophical in nature, of the emergence of meanings in human experience. The focus from this point forward will, therefore, be upon the adequacy of personal meanings, the description of their development, and expression in life, for the restoration of interiority. First, there must be some clarification of what is proposed by the term "meaning."

The word "meaning" is frequently used, often with indeterminate meaning. Its meaning is, in fact, often taken as understood, but when pushed, a clear definition cannot be given. Meaning in life is centered around clusters of value, and of attitudes which give a particular trajectory to a life. Meaning is linked with purpose and intention, and with awareness of that purpose and direction. The awareness may not always be articulated however. It is in this broad sense that meaning is used here. Yet it is not complete. For further elaboration Ross Snyder's consideration of meaning gives helpful insight.

Snyder includes the definition of meaning just given in his own thinking, since, for him meaning is a structure of elements that provide a frame for human existence. This pattern of elements together comprise direction and purpose for life. They give "the point" of human life. This definition also embraces something of what is meant by "identity." Thus meanings tell me who I am, they distinguish me from others, since

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my meanings are my own, and not perfectly duplicated in the life of
another. They have emerged out of my life experience, which has not
only been their source, but also confirmed them in further experience.
This personal experience is unique, no one else has had it the same
way.[65] The experience that is generative of meaning is not always a
positive and life enhancing experience, the experience itself may be
unpleasant, one in which the subject felt guilt, shame, or the pain of a
loss.[66]

In Snyder's works meaning has an insistent religious aspect. He
declares that meaning in life links a person to the Holy.[67] God, the
Holy, is a wild, surging energy, one who not only journeys with, as a
Presence, on a pilgrimage, but sends out the self on journey. Life
becomes a journey with the "wild energies of God,"[68] the One who is
"Greatest-Than-Self."[69] The encounter may also be an arresting event,
vivid and life altering. The power of the Holy cannot be "ignored or
profaned with impunity."[70] The particular events in my life which act
as bearers of meaning include those in which the Holy "WHAMMED ME."[71]
Meaning as an element of human existence that links the self with the
Holy will be maintained in the present work. God will be seen as the
ultimate bearer of meaning.

The religious nature of meaning is broader than the experience of
the Holy in this way. Meaning is what it "connects me with." Beyond
the Holy, meaning allows the self to be membered to the people of God.
The people of God is a special culture, a group of people "who believe
in each other and something together, and move through time with a

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destiny."[72]   Meaning therefore is fundamentally intersubjective.

Meaning is also that which enlivens me. It brings to me whatever in my life is vital and alive. Someone has asked, "What is the meaning of 'cat'?"[73]   The response may be conceptual, as in "a four legged animal, fur covered and bearer of live young which are suckled." On the other hand, I discover the meaning of "cat" when I place a mouse in front of a cat. That is its meaning, existentially. Thus meaning is what makes me alive. It is the life world which I have created for myself. I am a self-in-world, and through that pattern of relationships, transactions and encounters of this self-in-world, meaning is born, and may be strengthened and confirmed so as to provide the necessary resources for life's tasks.

Meaning is future oriented.[74]   It is the future it makes possible. Snyder affirms:

> Something means to us when it makes alive the
> Self, when it strengthens the causes and persons we
> care for, when it enables new possibility to burgeon
> forth.[75]

"New possibilities" are the future which is formed by meanings. Meaning, and its richness and diversity in a person, makes future, as an empowering and broadening aspect of existence, possible. The fewer and less developed meanings are, the narrower and more restricted is the future experienced by that person.

It is clear that there are many elements to meaning. They are not isolated from each other, but webbed together. Meaning is a gestalt, a total system, pattern or web of meanings in which each part enlivens the others. The meanings of a life are not totally discrete, separate

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entities. They are all linked and each meaning works on others drawing out its own particular characteristics into clearer definition. Further, the development of one meaning has an effect on the whole system of meanings, transforming it, even if only in small ways.

This understanding of meaning, and Snyder's whole work on meanings, are significant for the present task for they take into account the individual as existing. Both the enculturation, and cognitive models of religious education fail to do this. The model exists in a conceptual world of its own, external to the subject. An approach to religious education based on meanings is concerned with life as it is lived. It embraces subjectivity, as well as objectivity. Therefore it becomes a central notion for the renewal of interiority in religious education by its inclusion of a wider horizon of elements of human experience. A wider horizon, that is, than the cultural atmosphere, deeply influenced by the ascendency of science, allows.

The next task will be to describe how meanings emerge and are developed in the lives of individuals. This will demand a careful consideration of the contexts of the lived world, including space and time, of the nature of the relation between the self and the world, and the self and other selves. The role of decision and choice must also concern the manner of meanings formation. Since the way out of the mind is through perception, and the approach to religious education based on meanings is of lived experience, some detailed account of perception will be required.

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CHAPTER 2

The Womb of Meanings: Self-in-the-World

Two prominent approaches to religious education, that is the enculturation and cognitive development models, have been presented and critiqued. Then a proposal was made for an alternative approach to religious education through meanings formation, as a way of renewing interiority. This raises the question, "How are personal meanings formed?" The problem of describing, with sufficient precision to be philosophically defensible, the emergence of personal meanings is the concern of this chapter, and the following two. First, it must be noted that the description of meanings involves certain requirements. It must focus upon lived experience, since meanings are part of that experience. That is, it must be concerned with the individual as existing, and not as conceptually separate from the world. Therefore the description is to be fundamentally related to the concrete world. This immediately raises the issues of the relation of the self to the world, which provides the context of lived experience, including other persons. Further, some consideration of the relationship between the mind and the body should be given. These are important aspects of the self in which meanings arise, and have been the focus of reflection in the modern era of philosophy. The description must be adequate to all demands.

Meanings are the focus of the description because they are directly linked to interiority since they represent the subjective appropriation

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of concrete events in a world which exists independently of the observer. In order to examine interiority, therefore, it will be necessary to consider perception and meaning in an intelligible framework. This broad task will proceed by a description, using themes from philosophy, of the manner in which personal meanings are formed, beginning with perception. Further, it will involve a consideration of the contexts of formation of meanings. It is proposed that this task be accomplished with the support of selected elements of philosophical thought, namely existentialism and phenomenology. It is affirmed therefore, that the quest for the way in which meanings are formed through reflection upon both subjective and objective elements of experience, rooted in the concrete situation, leads to a re-consideration of religious education theory's philosophical foundations.

The stress upon perception of the concrete world suggests that truth in meanings that are formed must be existence. The objective reality that is the world founds meanings, and corrects wrong perceptions and mistaken meanings. Should I see a small table but mistake it for a chair, I discover that it is not a chair because of what is given to me by the world. The object is a table, because it fulfills those characteristics by which a table is known. If it did not it would be constituted as something else. The world of persons and interactions between persons is much more complex than such a simple situation. A shy person who is joining a group of persons whom he/she has never met before is sensitive to every gesture and word of the group. He/she looks for signs of acceptance, or of hostility and

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his/her behavior is adjusted according to what is perceived. There is greater room for error in judging the meaning of the elements in this situation. However, it is still the real world that gives the meanings. The real world here is not merely the physical presence of certain people but also the mental constructions brought to the situation by cultural and personal factors. Therefore objectivity is to be affirmed as a fundamental aspect of the emergence of meaning. Primary elements in the recovery of interiority are the things themselves, that is, the terminus of perception, which include physical and mental phenomena.

Before going further it is necessary to provide a general introduction to phenomenology. Following that is a consideration of those themes of phenomenology which support the present descriptive task.

Phenomenology and Husserl

The beginning point is to note that for sensory perception the object is given to me as a meaning. It is given in more than its physicality. All that is given in a purely physical sense may be an expanse of color of certain proportions, and if within reach, its relative hardness and smoothness. It bears a meaning. It is a table. The object is appropriated in consciousness as a "table." This is the way objectity is experienced, and comprises the subjectivity of experience. It is this subjectivity which is tied to the notion of meanings. For my experience of the table includes more than seeing the object allows. There are perspectives of the table that I do not see,

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but which my consciousness assumes which allow the meaning of the experience of seeing a table.

These observations have been made, and have become the focus of profound reflection by phenomenologists. Their thinking is most useful to advance a theory of religious education based on meanings formation, and the interiority this involves. Their reflection meets the requirements made by a description of the emergence of meanings.

This phenomenological approach differs from that referred to in work which is influenced by the empiricist tradition. That approach tends to list and describe situations, behaviors, values and attitudes as well as physical objects as free as possible from the subject's perspective. These latter are known as the phenomena of a given situation. Phenomenology as a strand of European philosophical thinking is to be distinguished from this approach.

What follows then is a description of the ways meanings come to be formed in persons' lives according to phenomenology, and to a lesser extent existentialist thinkers. This distinction between phenomenologists and existentialist thinkers is rather arbitary since their methods are similar in a number of respects, and the work of some thinkers may be both phenomenological and existentialist. Gabriel Marcel is a good example of a thinker for whom these terms may be combined.

To undertake a description of the formation of meanings according to the methods of phenomenology is risk laden, and may be open to misunderstanding. Phenomenology is both a style of thinking, a

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method or process, and a philosophy. As a style of thinking or an approach to life, it is concerned with primitive descriptions of the world, descriptions free from conceptualizations, and free from scientific categories. It is recognized that some conceptualization will inevitably occur with the use of language in communication, but what is to be avoided is the "spirit of abstraction" against which Marcel protested. Thus phenomenology is a methodology which anyone could undertake for him/herself. But it is also a philosophy. As Merleau-Ponty says of phenomenology:

> it is also a philosophy for which the world is
> 'already there' before reflection begins - as an in-
> alienable presence; and all its efforts are concentrated
> upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the
> world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical
> status.1

It is to be kept in mind that phenomenology is a methodology as well as a philosophy, lest the description of the constitution of meanings concentrate on its philosophical themes in a way that is inconsistent with it as a style of thinking. It would be wrong, or at least, misleading and a misrepresentation, to commence such a description with abstract conceptualizations and then see how they might work in the real world. This would be starting in the wrong place, to put the cart before the horse, phenomenologically speaking, and represent the style of thinking to which phenomenology objects.

It is also a difficult undertaking in as much as the thinking and writings of phenomenologists, and for that matter, existentialist thinkers are not systematic. They do not set out to describe vast,

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complete systems of conceptual thought, giving, in turn, attention to such ideas as God, evil, the world, and other topics. It is, rather, in opposition to this kind of philosophizing that they write. This description, however attempts to synthesize themes pertinent to the realm of meanings formation from a selection of thinkers. This involves a certain danger, and it must not be forgotten, that only a selection from works of other thinkers is included in this description. The selection of certain themes is not meant to suggest, even inadvertently, that these themes are mere abstract conceptualizations and to be dealt with as such. Rather the description given here serves to set forth the manner of thinking of phenomenologists, their concern for the discussion on the nature of consciousness and quest for meanings. The last one third of this work will suggest a framework in which anyone might undertake phenomenological reflection, and practice interiority. The descriptive elements therefore are, in a sense, prefatory to the invitation to be a phenomenologist.

In a general sense phenomenology is a study of a descriptive nature. It is a reflection which seeks to avoid interpretation, evaluation, or the forming of axioms. Moreover, phenomenological enquiry is not concerned with the verification of a pre-conceived model or organization of the phenomena according to any a priori categories. It is an investigation which deals with what is directly manifest. It is experiential, that is the immediate experience of a person in the world. Thus, the data of phenomenological enquiry is lived experience, that is the world as directly experienced in the subjectivity of daily

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living.

The term "phenomenology" has been in use since the eighteenth century. Etymologically, _phaino_ means to bring into sight, make something appear, to be seen, and to appear. _Phainomenon_ stands for what appears, what is manifested. Phenomenology, therefore, is a theory dealing with appearing as appearing.

Edmund Husserl (1859 - 1938) is a founding father of the movement of phenomenology as a way of thinking. His aim was to develop a method of philosophical enquiry and analysis that was a science. It was to be thorough, even exhaustive, and, through his methodology, allow a knowledge of essences.[2] For Husserl the immediate intuition is always the founding act of experience. Thus, phenomena give themselves to consciousness through perception, and all reflection, all cognitive processes are rooted in the experience of the world. Consciousness, having received the phenomena, may make judgements, use reason, imagination, will or memory. These are all founded acts, founded upon direct intuition.

Intentional Consciousness

Husserl was concerned with a particular kind of consciousness.[3] He distinguished between three types of consciousness. The first was the stream or flux of consciousness which has no particular direction. A second type of consciousness is that of inner-perception or self-awareness. But it is the third type that most concerns Husserl, and that has become an important theme for phenomenology in general. This third type of consciousness is called "intentional consciousness." When

a subject perceives an object, he or she is tending towards an object, seeking its meaning. There is an "aiming" at the intentional object. This is not a special act, but is the activity of alert consciousness when objects are presented to it. Intentional consciousness is aiming at the meaning of the object. Therefore, in an intentional lived experience there is a sense or meaning which is given to the subject. It is not something "behind" the object but is given with the physical characteristics of the object. The meaning is determined by the nature of the object.

Husserl holds that each object has an "eidos" or essence. Intentional consciousness is aimed at this essence. It is significant to note that the essence is not a metaphysical reality that parallels the physical, concrete object in its individuality. Again, there is nothing "behind" the object. The essence is the set of conditions which are both sufficient and necessary to affirm an object. As an example, a square might be considered. As soon as one of the terms "four right angles" or "four intersecting lines" is eliminated it is not possible to say that the object is a square. When these elements are considered together there is the possibility, and the necessity to affirm it as a square. But the square is not fulfilled by the geometrical figure drawn on a chalk board. This is an "empty signification," the square is rather fulfilled in the side of a child's wooden play block.

The notion of intentional consciousness is foundational for the phenomenological method. Gabriel Marcel reminds his audience:

> Husserl . . . finally clarified the 'intentional' character of consciousness. That phrase means that

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> our consciousness is essentially a consciousness
> of, or more precisely a consciousness directed
> towards, something. It is directed towards
> a reality from which it cannot be severed except by
> a process of vicious abstraction.4

Intentional consciousness is directly relevant to the present

consideration of meanings formation, and the related concern for

interiority. It affirms that lived experience is directed toward

something, namely the meaning of the experience. It affirms that a

person's life intends toward meaning. It supports my experience that I

seek to mean something with my life. My life intends meaning. In as

much as intentional consciousness is directed toward meaning it is also

an element in interiority. It is the discovery of the manner in which

consciousness is directed toward meaning, and the reflection upon the

way this is forming the individual that makes interiority possible.

The Phenomenological Reduction

Fundamental to Husserl's phenomenology is his doctrine of the

"epoche" or reduction. The first level is the psychological-

phenomenological reduction described by Henri Ellenberger:

> The observer "puts the world between the brackets,"
> i.e. he excludes from his mind not only any judgment
> of value about the phenomena but also any affirmation
> whatever concerning their cause and background; he even
> strives to exclude the distinction of subject and
> object and any affirmation about the existence of the
> object and of the observing subject.5

Husserl goes on to propose two levels of the reduction. They are

the "eidetic" and the transcendental reduction, or epoche proper. By

the eidetic reduction the essence or "eidos" of the object is manifest

by disentangling it from what is purely not itself. The mind considers

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the essence alone, and puts the individual circumstances into brackets. Only the sufficient and necessary elements constitutive of an object are kept. By this reduction not only is there a sensible intuition of the individual but also an intuition of the intelligible, that is its meaning. Things are able to speak for themselves, disentangled from theoretical knowledge or conceptual assumptions.

For Husserl the ultimate level of the reduction is the transcendental reduction. This is to suspend the positing of the world as existing. The world is revealed as a pure correlate of consciousness. What now appears is that which is constituted by consciousness as the ultimate giver of meaning. This is the realm of pure phenomenology and is to be distinguished from phenomenological method. Husserl's development of the epoche and the transcendental ego led him towards idealism in his later writings.

Phenomenologists who have followed Husserl and who considered themselves as carrying on the spirit of his efforts, have utilized a number of the emphases of his work, such as the notion of intentional consciousness discussed above. They have not followed through with the transcendental reduction although the technique of "putting into the brackets" has been a general principle. In Merleau-Ponty, for example, the reduction is the epoche of science. What is put into the brackets is the world of pure science. This world has so infiltrated the thinking of popular culture that the primitive experience is overwhelmed. Health for instance is not so much a feeling of well being and vigor, but the measure of caloric input in the body, of cholesterol

and tri-glyceride levels in the blood and blood pressure readings. The experience of the weather, and the response to it is based on a scientific chart with high pressure domes, cold or warm fronts, with predicted ozone levels of 150, with 85% humidity. Traveling in the Los Angeles area I do not find the air to contain 85% humidity, with an ozone level of 150 and certain particulate matter. The air is smoggy, there is a heavy gray-brown haze, it smells and my eyes smart. Merleau-Ponty's technique to allow the primitive experience to come to light is to put the scientific approach in parentheses.

The reduction may be seen at work as persons seek to uncover the meanings of specific events in their lives. A pastor, as a participant in a Meanings Formation Workshop (which is described in Chapter 5), wrote of a formative experience in her youth.[6] She recounted:

> I don't remember anything else of that Christmas Eve
> service 32 years ago other than the shaft of enlightenment
> that penetrated my 16-year-old being as the pastor of our
> church began his pastoral prayer in the darkened sanctuary:
> "Eternal God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Father of
> all children of earth. . . ." My inner ears perked up. At
> that time I didn't know why. I only knew that the pastor
> hadn't included children specifically in his prayers before.

Other parts of the prayer did not seem relevant to the woman, although she listened with hope filled expectation. However, she could still say:

> it was enough of a self-recognition, enough of a
> recognition of my true state by another, that I felt
> known for the first time in my life. . . . It was years
> before I realized I didn't have to survive abusive
> parenting anymore. For I <u>had</u> reached adulthood,
> and I could choose to be responsible for my own
> happiness.

The phenomena given to the woman were the elements of the worship service, on a Christmas Eve at the Festival of the birth of Jesus, and

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all that was communicated by them. In particular were the words of the prayer. Immediately they were mere sounds, but filled with meaning for her. In a way that had never happened before she was affirmed as a person, known by another as a person, and so experienced true community. These phenomena were presented with certain mental phenomena, memories and aspirations, as the surge from within to transcend the pain and hurt, to somehow find meaning in it all.

The meaning of this event as recognition and affirmation, the experience of existing in a new way, was further elucidated over the years, when it incorporated a sense of freedom. It meant liberation from the sense that she was controlled by others, an object of the will of people. This meaning comes to light as the individual circumstances are bracketed out. Thus, in this meaning bearing experience there is an epoche of science that allows the personal elements of the experience to be preserved. Thus we are led to the conclusion that there is a more primitive world than that of the world laden with the categories of science. It is the Life-world.

The Lebenswelt

This is another Husserlian notion that is an important part of the phenomenological method. Further, it is also at the foundation of the formation of meanings. It is the Lebenswelt, or Life-world. The notion of Life-world came towards the end of Husserl's life. It is the world as experienced in all its subjectivity in the day-by-day world. It is the pre-objective, pre-reflexive world prior to being analyzed and set out in a series of mathematical equations. It is the world as it is

lived. The life-world is the basis of description and reflection by phenomenologists following Husserl. Merleau-Ponty is most characteristic of this approach. His reflection has a style that expresses a concrete world experienced in subjectivity.

Aron Gurwitsch elaborates Husserl's notion of the <u>Lebenswelt</u>, and its relationship to the world of science.[7] The development of modern science with its objectively valid universe has overwhelmed the world of everyday experience. The world of common experience has been almost replaced by the modern scientific view of the world. Gurwitsch argues that in fact it is the subjective world which lies at the foundation of the modern world view. Although the scientific world is a fabrication of ideal constructs, there is something that lies behind it. At the foundation of the theoretical construct is the Life-world. Ultimately, every verification and every piece of evidence for the scientific world view is taken from the <u>Lebenswelt</u>. Gurwitsch concludes:

> For an ultimate clarification of the universe of
> science, one has, therefore, to turn to the <u>Lebenswelt</u>
> and to bring out the role which it plays . . . in the
> construction and constitution of science.[8]

The common experience of the world which we share is a complex and vast set of inter-relationships with other people, animals and things. Each is related to other entities in various ways. Nothing is a discrete entity isolated from all others. The world of common experience, the Life-world, includes the world of nature, though not as classified, categorized or analyzed by scientific procedures. There is more than the natural world, for the Life-world includes music, art and literature,

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entities that are human constructions and have human meanings and
significances.

The social aspects of the _Lebenswelt_ are important.[9] Gurwitsch
notes that our relationships and interactions with others who also
inhabit the world along with us, may be as disinterested observers, or
may be as fellow persons engaged in cooperative enterprises for the
common good. Therefore he can affirm, "The term Lebenswelt has
essentially a historico-social connotation: a _Lebenswelt_ is relative to
a certain society at a given moment of its history."[10]

The work of communities, their ideals, aspirations and hopes, their
history and social structures, things both physical and mental become a
part of the _Lebenswelt_. This is a dynamic, changing entity that is
interpreted and re-interpreted through time for and by those whose Life-
world it is. Those who share a _Lebenswelt_ are both objects and subjects
within it.

The _Lebenswelt_ is appropriate as the starting point of reflection
upon the world and its meaning since, as Gurwitsch states:

> The _Lebenswelt_ proves to be the ground of our existence,
> a ground which is accepted as a matter of course, as pre-
> given and existing independently of, and previous to, all our
> activities, individual as well as collective.[11]

The use of the notion of Life-world by others makes clear that it has
boundaries for each person. All that happens in the world is obviously
not lived by each person. It could never be so because of the
limitations of the human condition. There are certain judgments made
that define a person's Life-world. The particular interests and
propensities developed by a person will incline him/her to choosing

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some things in his/her Life-world over against others. For Rollo May

Life-world is "the structure of meaningful relationships in which a

person exists, and in the design of which he participates."[12] The

implication of this definition is that the Life-world is constructed by

the individual through his/her decisions. It is such a construction, by

the implementation of choice and decision, that concerns Ross Snyder

when he states that out of a total universe:

> We each _select out_ those objects and relationships which
> are particularly meaningful to us; organize a vivid world
> out of these, and consign the rest of the world to the fringe
> of our consciousness. 13

According to Snyder this life world refers both to the realm of

meanings that arise in consciousness and to socially objective

structures. He affirms,

> "Life-World" is both the dependable constellation of
> transactions, and our way of representing these to
> ourselves, plus the meaning which these have for us. This is
> the way it is in life; the language which we feel and think
> should correspond to life.14

The issue of values which is raised by the discussion of the setting of

boundaries of the Life-world will be taken up in a later section.

The Elements of the Life-World

The notion of Life-world in the phenomenological method serves to

set the context of lived experience. It relates lived experience to the

concrete world. In the lived world of immmediate, concrete experience

there is a "horizon."[15] The horizon as I work is the table, chairs,

wall, window, and drapes. I see a table lamp, the object against the

horizon. Perception terminates in this scene of the object and

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background horizon. The horizon is not merely something extra to the object. The horizon helps define the object. The horizon sets the boundaries of the object, and the object rests in relation to all else because of the horizon. Elements of the horizon are presented with perspectives of the object, some of which are not available to my perception, and so guarantee those perspectives for the subject. That elements of the horizon are identified as being near the side of, or beyond, the object, the sides and back of the object are guaranteed. They must be present.

For phenomenology there is more than the object and the horizon. There is a third element. It is the subject, and this is an embodied consciousness. The mind is not separate from the body. Merleau-Ponty discusses "body image" and his comments highlight the relationship of the elements mentioned:

> the body image is finally a way of stating that my body is in-
> the-world. As far as spatiality is concerned . . . one's
> body is the third term, always tacitly understood, in the
> figure-background structure, and every figure stands out
> against the double horizon of external and bodily space. One
> must therefore reject as an abstraction any analysis of
> bodily space which takes account only of figures and points,
> since these can neither be conceived nor be without
> horizons. 16

The body is a central theme for Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological analysis. He is writing in protest of the Cartesian heritage of the mind/body dichotomy. For Merleau-Ponty the body is not a machine manipulated by the mind. Lived experience is not that of a mind sending messages to move the limbs. Through my body I have the sense of riding a bicycle. The mind is not causing, by the sending of messages, my

limbs to pedal and steer. I do not live a series of messages, I just
ride the bicycle. An implication of this view of the incarnate
consciousness is that the body is not another object amongst other
objects. This is recognized by the way in which our language expresses
the relationship of the body to objects. If my arm is resting on the
table, it would not occur to me to say that my arm is beside the desk
lamp in the same way that the desk lamp is beside the telephone.

Merleau-Ponty argues that the body also helps form meanings. He
contends:

> The body is our general medium for having a world. Sometimes
> it is restricted to the actions necessary for the conservation
> of life, and accordingly it posits around us a biological
> world; at other times, elaborating upon these primary actions
> and moving from their literal to a figurative meaning, it
> manifests through them a core of new significance. . . .
> Sometimes, finally, the meaning aimed at cannot be achieved by
> the body's natural means; it must build itself an instrument,
> and it projects thereby around itself a cultural world. 17

The notion of the embodied consciousness transcends the
subject/object split. The instrument projected by the body becomes, not
a part of, but at least an extension of the body. In use, the
blind man's stick is not an object but an area of sensitivity, extending
touch and paralleling vision. When driving on a crowded city street, or
in a parking lot, the space is judged to be sufficient to "get through"
or not. The automobile has become an extension of body space.

Lived space is an important factor in the formation of human
meanings. Whether or not I feel that there is "room" for my ideas, or if
there is a space that I can grow into, will mold the meaning of my life.
This notion of spatiality goes beyond the meaning of physical space, to

another level. Ellenberger describes two types of spatiality that are part of lived experience. The first is oriented space.[18] This is the experience of height and breadth, and the sense of near space and remote space. That is, lines of equal length have different values depending on whether they appear in near space or remote space. For oriented space, the reference point is the body. This oriented space is that which has dominated the discussion to this point.

The second type of space that Ellenberger enumerates is "attuned" space.[19] This is a term used by Ludwig Binswanger in his "Daseinanalysis" developed from Heidegger's phenomenology. Attuned space is the spatial experience determined by a person's feeling tone. Ellenberger explains:

> At the same moment that one is experiencing oriented space, the reference point of which is one's own body, one is also experiencing a special quality of space in accord with one's mood. The pitch or tone of one's inside oriented space may be one of fullness or emptiness; it may be felt as expanding or constricting.[20]

Attuned space is also of particular types. It includes "dance space," in which there is "no historical movement,"[21] but a movement of rhythm, ebbing and flowing, clear space and dark space. As a milieu for meanings formation the experience of clear space is relevant. This, Ellenberger elaborates:

> is not only the space of horizon, perspective, and distinct-ness; its fundamental characteristic is . . . distance
> vecue [experienced distance]: between individuals there is felt "free space" that enables the fortuitous, the unforeseen, the emotionally neutral and results in a certain "amplitude of life."[22]

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Embodied Consciousness

This notion has already been introduced by Merleau-Ponty's discussion included above. Methodologically it is important since it deals with the issue of the relationship between the body and the mind, an essential context for the development of meanings. It is also significant for meanings as it is the way in which we have meanings. Some attention is now given to this theme as it is developed by Gabriel Marcel.

Gabriel Marcel's phenomenological approach has led him also to adopt the notion of embodied consciousness. He sometimes refers to it as "incarnation," consciousness as inseparable from the body. Incarnation, Marcel attests, "applies solely and exclusively . . . to the situation of a being who appears to himself to be linked fundamentally and not accidentally to his or her body."[23] My situation is such that I am inserted into the existent universe and my presence in the world is through my body. As a corollary it may be noted that my body makes possible my insertion into the world. The world is existent, concrete, and contributes to the formation of the self as meaning. Marcel states, "I am in the world only insofar as the world is not a representation, but as something shaping me as in a womb."[24] He insists "I am my body," but this does not relegate the status of my body to that of an object. He further contends, "my body is mine in so far as for me my body is not an object but, rather, I am my body."[25] The recognition that there is not a "gap" between me and my body, that consciousness can never be detached from the body consists the intuition that I am my body. Marcel argues:

> I _am_ my body in so far as I succeed in recognizing that this body of mine _cannot_, in the last analysis, be brought down to the level of being this object, _an_ object, a something or other."26

This theme is consistent through Marcel's writings, and indeed, he insists upon it. The formation of meanings therefore, is set in the context of a world in which the integrated self exists in a participatory relationship with the world.

As in Merleau-Ponty's thinking Marcel is radically opposed to a body/mind dualism, and is also opposed to a subject/object dualism. He makes it clear that he too is responding to the Cartesian view that sets the body over against the mind, and also the medieval supernaturalism which embraces a body/soul dualistic view. Neither of these contentions have a place in Marcel's thought.

His insistence on incarnation or embodied consciousness leads Marcel to reject two other views of the relationship between the self and the world. These are the instrumental view of the body and the message theory of perception. The instrumental conception of the body suggests that may arm is manipulated by my mind to move my pen from desk to pocket, the place I desire it to be. This presumes that my body serves as the agent or instrument by which the mind is mediated in the concrete world. The mistaken thinking involved in this notion is that of an infinite regress. Marcel argues:

> If, then, we think of the body as merely an instrument, we must think of the use of the body as being the extension of the powers of some _other_ body (a mental body, an astral body, or what you will); but this mental or astral body must itself be the instrument that extends the powers of some third kind of body, and so on for ever.27

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Elsewhere Marcel again rejects all notions of the body as a tool, but instead, "my body . . . is given to me as the absolute condition of all possible instrumentality—and also of all possible enjoyment; in this sense it is given to me as being my all."[28] Towards the end of the Metaphysical Journal he has protested, "I do not make use of my body, I am my body."[29]

The message theory of perception is rejected for reasons similar to the rejection of the instrumentalist view of the body. The message theory involves the model of emitter, some kind of message and receptor. A stone, for example, is supposed to emit particles and my camera-like receiving post takes the message and translates it into images in my brain. But the fact of the matter for me is different. My son walks into my office on his return from school. I do not live any wave from messages transmitted and received, rather I perceive my son. There he is.

Marcel rightly notes that the transmission/reception model involves some kind of mediation, that is a process which attains its end through a certain number of stages. However, recognizing that what is immediate "can be considered as mediatizable ad infinitum,"[30] Marcel advocates a special kind of entity demanded by his view of the relationship between the body and the world, that is a body which cannot be detached from sensation and feeling. Therefore, he contends, "we have to recognize the need to postulate the existence of what I will call a non-mediatizable immediate which is the very root of our existence."[31] Thus the embodied consciousness is the ultimate reference point for my

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existence. It is the "existential fulcrum."[32]

The notion of the mind/body and soul/body split has been influential in philosophy and religion, and has attributed the body an inferior status as matter and instrument, or as fleshly and weak. Marcel suggests that this is the result of "primary reflection" which "is forced to break the fragile link between me and my body that is constituted here by the word 'mine.'"[33] Marcel's notions of primary and secondary reflection are fundamental to his views. It is not possible to present a faithful discussion of his work without giving them some consideration. The natures of these two types of reflection, and the distinctions between them provide a skeletal structure to his philosophical endeavors. They are considered here since they are relevant to his discussion of the mind/body relationship and embodied consciousness.

Primary reflection is the reflection of the scientist. It has to do just with the objective world. Primary reflection gives a precise description of the world in objective terms, from the point of view of the spectator. It is an important level of reflection because it gives rise to technology, and thus, well-being, to humanity through advances in agriculture, medicine, communication and transportation.

Primary reflection, however, is limited. It cannot support a view of reality on its own. It is the obsession with primary reflection that has contributed to what Marcel describes as "the broken world."[34] The broken world is the world which has lost sight of human value. Persons become treated as mere things by the state and corporate

business bureaucracies. They are reduced to numbers and functions. They are limited to certain biographical details in manila files or the hard disc of computer data base systems. The broken world is characterized by haste, superficiality and shallowness. Primary reflection cannot offer the possibility of the kind of reflection which views the person as participating in being. Primary reflection rather tends to squeeze transcendency out of life.

Marcel proposes another kind of reflection, recuperative in nature.[35] He explains:

> Secondary reflection . . . manifests itself rather by a refusal to treat primary reflection's separation of this body, considered as just a body . . . from the self that I am, as final.[36]

Secondary critiques primary reflection, and highlights its limitations. Secondary reflection considers the subject as participating in being. It is not a mere observer. The individual as being experiences others as being too. The mind faces the other not just as existing but as being. It transcends objective reflection to the ontological level of reflection.

Marcel's notions of primary and secondary reflection imply a three layered reflection upon reality. I see a tree, it is known by me as "this tree" in its concrete existence, with its particular characteristics of shape, foliage, branches and trunk. Secondly it is known scientifically in its biological constitution, by its botanical name, its genus and species. Now the immediacy of knowledge of the tree is lost since the scientific reflection has demanded abstraction. Certain conceptual affirmations are made of it and it is purely an

object. Thirdly, this objective conception is transcended by secondary reflection, in which the tree is known, metaphysically, as being. Marcel's enterprise is to restore the "ontological weight" to existence,[37] where "Ontological weight means the weight of Being or weight with respect to Being."[38] An essential part of this enterprise is reflection upon the concrete world, his "secondary reflection" and the understanding of the self as embodied consciousness. Primary reflection alone, reveals the objective body and proposes an emitter/receiver or instrumental model for the relationship between the mind and the body. This is rejected in favor of the notion of incarnation.

Constituting Consciousness

Finally, the constitutive function of consciousness or the constituting consciousness has been a notion from Husserl which has been adopted by phenomenological enquiry and the theory of meanings formation. It is that function of consciousness which makes sense of the phenomena presented to the subject. For Husserl there is a constitutive activity in the whole of perception and understanding. Concerning that consciousness which dispenses meaning Husserl states:

> all real unities are "unities of meaning." Unities of meaning
> presuppose . . . a sense giving consciousness, which, on its
> side is absolute and not dependent in its turn on sense bestowed
> on it from another source.[39]

A little further on he affirms:

> Reality and world, here used, are just the titles for certain
> valid unities of meaning, namely, unities of "meaning" related
> to certain organizations of pure absolute consciousness which
> dispense meaning and show forth its validity in certain

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essentially fixed, specific ways.

Finally, it should be noted that Husserl adds, "the whole being of the

world consists in a certain 'meaning' which presupposes absolute

consciousness as the field from which the meaning is derived."[41]   This

level of absolute consciousness is accessible with the invocation of the

transcendental reduction. Phenomena face consciousness as pure

meanings, and the transcendental ego participates in absolute

consciousness. Meaning therefore is not established by a priori

categories of the human mind. Rather meaning is given in the phenomena

themselves to intentional consciousness.

   Constituting consciousness is a central theme in the work of Ross

Snyder.[42]   Worlds of meaning, culture and language are only possible

because of this quality. The intent of the person is to put together a

complex network of meanings, creating his/her Life-world. Snyder

argues:

> Every human being . . . is always "minding" for himself a
> momentary universe that is an arena for action, and a more
> enduring universe that is his location of home.[43]

Constituting consciousness for Snyder is perception plus valuing and

organizing. It is "not merely receiving--but tasting, selecting,

judging, forming strategies of relationship, resynthesizing,

constituting both self and world."[44]

Temporality

   Temporality is a primary context for the formation of meanings.

How might it be understood given the present approach? In the Life-world

temporality is experienced as "open." Present, past and future

are always accessible. From pre-philosophical times the metaphor or model for time has been that of a flowing stream or river. Snow melts, runs down the mountain side, joins up with other trickling streams, and then becomes a river flowing to the sea. While it is appropriate to speak of the flow of time, since each instant is succeeded by another, the image of the river tends to objectify time. The result is that an observing subject is presumed, separate from the image. The river, time, that is, is somehow "out there," isolated from the subject. The observer becomes aware of the flow through noticing the difference in the successive bodies of water swirling together.

This view of time is not that of lived experience. Rather, our lived experience is that of being in the river, moving along in the current, carried from one place to another. It is like being in a boat upon the river, and viewing different aspects of the bank and its passing scenery.[45] Merleau-Ponty declares:

> Time is, therefore, not a real process, not an actual succession that I am content to record. It arises from my relation to things. Within things themselves, the future and the past are in a kind of eternal state of pre-existence and survival. . . . What is past or future for me is present in the world.[46]

A person's sense of time is founded therefore upon his/her perception of certain existents. The person has been in a relationship toward a childhood home, friends and places in a long succession, and all are still present in the world. The relationship which will be sketched between the individual and certain existents not yet experienced comprises the future.

Since past and future are present in the world, it is consciousness

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that constitutes time. Consciousness moves from a past and a future to a present. Does this mean that time loses a sense of past, present and future, and is brought down to a single level? The sense of time is retained as long as the successive relationships are not completely deployed, and never completely constituted. These characteristics are best expressed by Merleau-Ponty:

> The remote past has also its temporal order, and its position in time in relation to my present, but it has these in so far as it has been present itself, that it has been 'in its time' traversed by my life, and carried forward to this moment. When I call up a remote past, I reopen time, and carry myself back to a moment in which it still had before it a future horizon now closed, and a horizon of the immediate past which is today remote. Everything, therefore causes me to revert to the field of presence as the primary experience in which time and its dimensions make their appearance unalloyed, with no intervening distance and with absolute self-evidence.47

Freedom, decision and time are closely related, even interfused in the formation of the Life-world and meanings. Intentional consciousness carries the person's Life-world forward. My choice about the manner I am in the world traces out in advance the style which is to come. The instant is not a closed world but commits those instants which succeed it in terms of the decision made and the action begun.

Time for many working in the realm of science has duration along a past and future axis. It also has simultaneity such that one moment may contain a number of events. For them time is a measurable continuum, and infinitely divisible into equal units. However, time as a lived experience is that of a flow which is not always constant. The flow of time as lived has the character of an arc, or trajectory in which time's flow is slower for the child than the adult person. Aging

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and growing has the effect of increasing the rate of flow of time as a lived experience. Ellenberger points to other conditions which have an effect on the experienced flow of time. He notes:

> One does not need to be a phenomenologist to know that time seems to flow more slowly when one experiences anxiety, boredom, grief, or sorrow but more rapidly in moments of joy, happiness, or elation.48

It is in the context of experienced time that meanings are shaped, and it has a moulding effect upon meanings for life. Ellenberger affirms:

> What we call the feeling of the "meaning of life" cannot be understood independently of the subjective feeling of experienced time. Distortions of the feeling of time necessarily result in the distortions of the meaning of life.49

This chapter has established a framework for the discussion of meanings formation, and the interiority incorporated within that process. It is a framework taken from phenomenology and claiming the lived world of primitive experience as fundamental for meanings formation, rather than the thematized world of science. The most significant contexts for meanings formation, including the self-in-the-world have also been considered.

This discussion is appropriate the concerns of meanings formation since they are part of the lived experience of the individual. It also constructs a framework from which to consider the way in which the practice of both meanings formation, and interiority may be viewed. These will be considered in the final two chapters of this work. The present discussion looks towards them.

Further, significant aspects of the formation meanings must now be

considered. These will include the shape given to life by choice and decision. Beyond this, the role of intersubjectivity and the intuition of being and their contribution to the interior life will be considered. These are to be the major themes of the following chapter.

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CHAPTER 3

Weaving Meanings: Decisiveness and Being

As the description of the emergence and development of meanings progresses, the impression is formed of meanings as the product of a most complex set of circumstances. These are not discrete entities but are all closely interrelated. They work together in a dynamic way for the generation of meaning. It is unfortunate that such a static sequential presentation, as this must be, tends to suppress the living process of the growth of meaning.

Beyond the description of certain aspects of perception and the manner in which the self is in the world, there are other significant factors in the genesis of meaning and its inherent inwardness. The presentation of these is the concern of this chapter. It includes the role of decisiveness, or decision making. Formative for the discussion on decision will be the existentialist thinkers Kierkegaard, Sartre, and Heidegger. Their understanding of the ways in which decision form the self, and thus bring meaning to it, help link meaning to the concrete world. Associated with the matter of decision is the related issue of human freedom. This will be affirmed following the investigation of choice. An introductory discussion of the intuition of being ensues. The relationship between this intuition and of intersubjectivity will be suggested. This prepares the way for a more developed consideration in the next chapter that will introduce a distinctly theological aspect to

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the matter of interority and meanings. From this investigation the

being of God will be affirmed, and the relationship between God and

meanings examined.

Choice and Decision

Choice, decisions and decisiveness are crucial elements in the

formation of the self, and so of human meaning. It is the decisions and

commitments relating to the way of being the world, concerning goals and

aspirations, that bestow on a life a trajectory or certain form. In a

group gathered to work on meanings and meaning bearing experiences of

life, one man told of his experience of a day at nursery school.[1]

He narrated:

> Class sessions had concluded and all the children prepared to
> leave. One by one they departed with a parent in tow. Soon I
> was the only one left. My mother did not come. Now it was
> just the teacher and I who were left standing by the door of
> the empty room.
> Still mother did not come. I did not know why mother
> had not come to pick me up this day. But I was certain that
> she would soon be there. I don't know how long the teacher
> and I had been waiting, but eventually she said to me, "Do
> you want me stay with you until your mother comes for you, or
> shall I go?" "It would be nice to have someone stay with me,"
> I thought. But then I felt that it was not always best to
> have what you want. It seemed that the teacher did not want
> to hang around waiting on one student. She must have had
> things she wanted to do. "You go," I said, "I'll wait for
> mother by myself." And the teacher did leave.
> It was a drab, gray day. The sky was gray and overcast,
> the building was gray and cold. I felt very alone as I stood
> near the nursery schoolroom. The wall of the room butted on
> to the wall of another bigger building and I sought refuge in
> the corner. I was uncertain, and afraid of being there alone.
> Confusion and fear nagged at me. I did not cry--at least I
> do not recall crying. Beneath the confusion there was still
> a feeling that mother would come.
> The clearest image of this day is that of my mother's
> arrival. Suddenly she was there. She leaned forward as she
> approached, arms wide and outstretched. She smiled a wide

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smile of joy. Her arms enfolded me.

Reflecting upon this experience the subject uncovered its meaning. It centered around decisiveness, and about the world as a place where difficult decisions often have to be made. His choice was to wait alone, or to require the teacher to stay with him. He believed that making the decision he did was to accept a challenge and that acceptance would help him discover who he was. He related, "the challenge was to see who I was. It seemed right too, in that it was doing something for another person."

Meanings and their formation aggregate around choice and decision. Decisions are a part of each person's lived experience. They are directly related to the concrete world. They are rooted in specific situations through the person involved. Decisiveness is also related to interiority since this focuses around the relationship which a person takes to the individual situation. From all the personal aspects of those events that transpire within consciousness when confronted with a situation, in which a decision is called for, interiority takes birth and is shaped.

Two existentialist philosophers who concern themselves with decisiveness and its qualities are Kierkegaard and Sartre. For Kierkegaard the self is formed by the decision that the individual makes. It is as if an individual comes into the world as _tabula rasa_, a blank slate, as far as the self is concerned, and subject to unreflecting responses to pleasurable stimulus. This is a feature of the first of what Kierkegaard regards as three modes of existence.

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Although his writings are not systematic, it possible to find these three perspectives in his work. The first level, or mode, is the aesthetic. This is life lived in immediacy, without any kind of reflection. Kierkegaard offers several ways in which this life might be lived, yet, whatever the style the end of the aesthetic life is despair. For this reason it must lead on to something else. It is not final, and is not the most worthwhile form of existence. This aesthetic sphere is marked by a kind of world weariness, life is too despairing to live but one cannot die. Beyond this surrender of the self to fate, the erotic stages of the aesthetic are described with reference to Mozart's operas.[3] Don Juan is representative of the most developed stage of erotic aesthetic experience. He is driven by unquenchable desire, a disposition which is all consuming. But his entire existence, including all his conquests, are a series of beginnings. Life is a long series of disconnected happenings. The tragic elements of the aesthete's existence are described with reference to Greek tragedy and the "Unhappiest Man."[4]

The discontinuous nature of aesthetic existence leads to boredom. To keep on living in immediacy requires considerable resourcefulness. So that interest in life is kept alive and bright, the individual instead of constantly changing his/her external situation to stave off boredom, is called to work each situation more intensively.

But the aesthetic existence leads inexorably to its only possible conclusion, despair. This occurs even in the character of Johannes in the Diary of a Seducer where existence is made interesting by

discovering that way in which one can get another, unsuspectingly, to do
exactly what one wishes.⁵ Ultimately, this too fails to bring
satisfaction.

There is another difficulty with the aesthetic life. It is never
where you look for it, since if you are looking for a specific situation
you have some idea about what you want. This is too reflective for the
aesthetic realm, since immediacy is then lost. Kierkegaard seems to
suggest that the lack of satisfaction comes from a need to have a sense
of solidity, of having one's life mean something. This is Kierkegaard's
broader quest. He writes in his journal:

> The thing is to understand myself, to see what God really
> wishes me to do; the thing is to find a truth which is true
> for me, to find the idea for which I can live and die.⁶

Kierkegaard's aesthetic life is certainly not the idea for which
one could live and die. That there should be a search for something
does not fit with the aesthetic realm's stress on immediacy. To search
and quest is rather more reflective. That for which one could live and
die also requires decisiveness and commitment through time.

Faced with boredom, the individual makes a choice. It is a
decision which leads to the next sphere of existence. This is the
ethical, and is the beginning of the religious life since the ethical is
to make a commitment to the universal. This, ultimately, is God. The
ethical life is described by Judge William,⁷ and marriage is its
paradigm. Now there is some continuity in existence, as fidelity in a
commitment gives direction to a life. Judge William proposes that the
aesthetic is still present in the ethical, but that the ethical gives it

an enhanced value.

The way to the ethical is by a leap. It cannot be made by purely rational analysis. A decision is involved, and the decision cuts off any on-going rationality. Choice, therefore, becomes all important since decision constitutes the self. I am the choices I make. I am formed as a self through the character of the decisions that I make through my life. The choices a person makes become a part of that person, they and their effects cannot be just brushed off. To omit giving direction to life by the failure to make decisions about it, by the refusal to be decisive, or by default, leaves a person's character empty and the self vague.

The fullest religious life is beyond even the ethical. It is described in lyrical form in Fear and Trembling and given a philosophical grounding in Concluding Unscientific Postscript. The life of faith is the most profound individual existence. It involves what Kierkegaard calls a "double-movement."[8] The paradigm of faith is portrayed by Abraham. The first part of the double movement is to give up, in utter resignation, that which is most treasured. Then by "reason of the absurd" to get it back completes the double movement. Lying not very far at the back of Kierkegaard's writing is his own experience of breaking his engagement to Regine Olsen, and perhaps some hope of restoration of that relationship. His whole discussion of faith, of resignation and restoration is set in the context of the Abraham story. Abraham is called to sacrifice Isaac. He prepared to do this by taking Isaac to the mountain top, building an altar and placing wood that he

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had brought with him upon it. Finally Isaac too is placed on the altar. He had reached the point where he was about to slay Isaac in response to God's command. The knife was in the air, poised over Isaac. Abraham has surrendered all that he treasured, including the only possibility of the fulfilment of God's promises to him. At that point he was directed to the sheep caught in the thicket. All is restored.

Again, the move to the religious sphere of existence is marked by decisiveness and commitment. It includes a "leap" of faith to accept the paradox of existence.[9] For Abraham the call to sacrifice Isaac is a call to obey God, but also to commit murder. The supreme paradox is the Incarnation, that the eternal has entered time in the God-man, Jesus.

In Kierkegaard the character of faith is marked by inwardness or interiority. It is the interiority of choice and commitment by which one is related in faith to God. He argues that faith is the "contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty."[10] The infinite passion of the individual's inwardness is the impassioned commitment of decisiveness, of a deep conviction that one is compelled to make. It is the commitment to God in the depths of one's being. The "objective uncertainty" is the objective uncertainty of God's existence. This understanding of faith is one based on conflict, so that to live in faith is to live in tension between the passion of a conviction and a rationally dubious proposition.

Faith on this understanding is also risk. The ultimate risk is that there is no God, and that the faith commitment was mistaken. If

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God does not exist then something is lost.

In each person's life there comes a moment in which a decision is to be made. For Kierkegaard it is a dizzying decision concerning a response to the world. The burden of the moment can be rejected, or it can be pretended that some historical destiny controls it. But within the moment the individual can make the "leap of faith."

The choice between faith and un-faith is just one of the choices which is presented. Others inevitably arise, and those of substance determine the character of the self. Kierkegaard asserts:

> The choice itself is decisive for the content of the personality, through the choice the personality immerses itself in the thing chosen, and when it does not choose it withers away in consumption.11

One significant choice is the response to one's own being, whether or not to choose oneself. Kierkegaard sees one of the sources of despair that plagues humanity to be refusing to choose oneself. Wanting to be other than oneself, in another situation, with different qualities, to have physical or mental attributes other than those one does have, or to want to have been born in other, more comfortable circumstances, leads to despair. Kierkegaard affirms, "So then he despairs, and his despair is: not willing to be himself."12

This same notion is taken up by Sartre. He discusses the goals people set themselves as "projects," activities which seek to express some plan of thought. He asserts:

> But this project itself inasmuch as it is the totality of my being, expresses my original choice in particular circumstances; it is nothing other than the choice of myself as a totality in these circumstances.13

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The refusal to choose oneself, as one is, constitutes one condition for "bad faith" since it is the attempt to escape one's situation.[14] Thus, for Sartre, not all behavior is a mark of authentic existence. It is inauthentic existence that he calls "bad faith," and there are several conditions in which bad faith may arise. When, for example, a person relates to another as subject to object, rather than to another being with the capacity for self transcendence, that person is drawn into bad faith. When a person is so concerned about the opinions of others, and regulates his/her behavior in response to others' opinions another condition for bad faith is fulfilled.

For Kierkegaard despair is resolved through believing. This involves the choosing of oneself, or the will to be oneself, and the connection of the self with God, "by relating itself to its own self, and by willing to be itself, the self is grounded transparently in the Power which constituted it."[15]

The matter of decisiveness is thus critical for Kierkegaard. The demand for decisions is inevitable and urgent. The demand to take a stand is sometimes avoided by the claim that more information is required. The risk for faith is to make this an issue by avoiding a hard decision.

In the case of Abraham and Isaac, Abraham is constrained against the killing of his son because of his love for Isaac, the moral revulsion of the act, and the memory of God's original promise. He is disposed to carrying out the murder because of his commitment to God. As Abraham climbs Mt. Moriah to set up the sacrificial altar there is no

further information available that is going to help him with his decision. It is a stark choice, one way or the other, between two possibilities, both of which have moral value. Kierkegaard highlights the moral dilemma. At the point at which a decision is to be made rationality is frequently exhausted. Choice then becomes a matter of impassioned conviction. When rationality is stretched to the limit, it is the non-rational elements that make the commitment, whatever that might be.

Decisiveness implies subjectivity. This is the conclusion of the discussion of the limits of rationality. The matter of subjectivity also relates to the decision concerning faith in God. The existentialist position is not that of subjectivism, eliminating distinctions between subject and object. There are objective data concerning all physical things. It is the meaning of these things for me that will be determined by my relationship to them. God is only accessible through subjectivity, and the subjective relationship. God is one to whom a commitment must be made if the notion of God is to have any meaning. Outside of that God can only be an intellectual concept. The content of the concept stresses the objective aspect, whereas the relationship concerns the subjective. Indeed Kierkegaard himself claims that objectivity has to do with content, but subjectivity with manner. It is this latter which is most critical for decisiveness, and for the present purpose, meaning in human living. Thus Kierkegaard argues:

> The objective accent falls on WHAT is said, the subjective accent on HOW it is said. . . . At its maximum this inward "how" is the passion of the infinite, and the passion of the

> infinite is the truth. But the passion of the infinite is
> precisely subjectivity, and thus subjectivity becomes the
> truth.[16]

Thus it is the manner of appropriation, my relationship to the phenomena presented to me in all their subjectivity, their meaning, that is determined by my inwardness or interior life.

The determination of the Life-world of the self and the character of the self by choice is a concern also of Heidegger. As in Sartre, Heidegger's reflection does not include God. For Heidegger the situation of the person in the world is "thrownness."[17] He affirms, "To Being-in-the-world, however, belongs the fact that it has been delivered over to itself—that it has in each case already been thrown into a world."[18] On this view each person's situation, ontologically, is such that he/she has no natural affinity for or relation to the world. There are no ready-made reference points, no structures of values to help the person. The ontological character of being is "ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the-world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world."[19] Being-ahead-of-itself is the movement of the self towards its own potentiality, the move to self fulfillment. This structural whole is referred to as "care."[20] The sense of "care" as Heidegger uses it bears no relationship to its everyday use. Ontologically, care is comprised of the three characteristics, Being-ahead-of-itself, Being-already-in and Being-alongside.[21] Being has the condition for the possibility of freedom for authentic existence, but also for inauthentic existence. Inauthentic existence is marked by "hankering," "addiction" and "urge."[22] Hankering is wishing for things

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to be other than they are, addiction is the complete surrender of
control of the self so that it becomes lived by the world rather making
its own way in the world. Urge is an impulse toward a single thing, and
in each case of urge possibilities for existence are closed off, put in
service of the addiction, or crowded out by the urge.

The result of care as an ontological characteristic of being is
that the self's potential can at least be fragmentarily realized.
Heidegger states:

> Man's perfectio-his transformation into that which he can be
> in Being-free for his ownmost possibilities (projection)--is
> 'accomplished' by 'care.'23

Related to thrownness is Heidegger's notion of "project." Project
and projection carry with them the sense of being thrown, as a
projectile. It is the condition of consciousness. The notion of
project is implied in Heidegger's reflection on understanding.
Concerning understanding then, Heidegger states:

> Understanding is the existential Being of Dasein's own
> potentiality-for-Being; and it is so in such a way that this
> Being discloses in itself what its Being is capable of.24

Heidegger's work focuses on the description of "Dasein," as appears in
this quotation. The approximate meaning of this word is "being there."
It holds together the concept of being, not as detached from the world,
but as tied to the concrete situation of space and time. However, it is
not made clear just what Dasein is.

In the human arena of the every day world understanding permits the
envisioning of further possibility. Understanding is the concrete
expression of the abstract Dasein's potential toward Being, and it

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presses forward to new possibilities. This occurs because of the existential structure of understanding which expresses itself as "projection."[25]

Consciousness is projected in many ways. One of these leads to meaning. Heidegger deliberates:

> If we say entities 'have meaning', this signifies that they have become accessible in their Being; and this Being, as projected upon its "upon which," is what 'really' 'has meaning' first of all.[26]

Those things which are intelligible, that is which have meaning, gain that intelligibility by the projection of the understanding of Being upon them. This does not mean that people have their meanings or possibilities thrust upon them. Each has the capacity to determine what the character of his or her life will be, whether authentic or inauthentic existence. Heidegger asserts that Dasein may choose to be itself or not, "Only the particular Dasein decides its existence, whether it does so by taking hold or by neglecting."[27] In each existential expression, each particular Dasein can choose to grasp itself or it can lose itself. It is authentic when it realizes that which is itself, and inauthentic when it is existentially determined by some external means. The most that human consciousness can hope for is "existential projection of an authentic Being-towards-death."[28]

What is critical for authentic existence is the comittment to that way of life. It is not assured or guaranteed in any way. The individual is free to make whatever he/she may desire of his/her life, or whatever may happen to him/her as the result of surrounding forces. The only way to authentic existence is the choice of that way, and

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maintenance of that choice through time.

Although Heidegger's phenomenological approach is sometimes difficult to follow he too includes the centrality of choice and decision which gives form or specific character to the self. However he does not include theological perspectives. Each person is given to the world and makes the best he/she can in being toward death.

It is through choice that my life takes form. A certain decision has led me to my vocation, and my energies are devoted to that activity rather than some other activity. It is around that chosen activity that my life, including my values, concerns, and the way in which I spend my time, is formed. It is this structure which helps give me my identity, and a meaning for my life. Thus each decision introduces a greater, or smaller, part of the structure of my life and infuses it with meaning and purpose. That I have chosen a certain way to relate to the world, rather than another brings with it a source of interiority. This can be lifted up, and examined in a way that will proposed in chapters 5 and 6 of this work. The role that decisiveness plays in forming meanings presumes the freedom to make decisions. An affirmation of human freedom, and a consideration of its character is now considered.

<u>Freedom</u>

Meaning formation is dependent upon human freedom. It is clear that if there is to be any "point" to my life, [29] that is, any meaning to life, choice and decision are essential. The assumption that accompanies choice is that freedom is real.

Kierkegaard posits the reality of freedom. There is a choice to be

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made, an either/or. Life is not a continuous dialectical movement
surging forth consisting of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. There may
be thesis and antithesis for him, but there is not synthesis. Rather
there is paradox and dilemma. Abraham will plunge the knife into his
son, or he will not. The choice is up to the individual. This freedom,
once grasped, cannot be taken away. Freedom can be lost through
indecision, and then other forces will take over and determine the
direction of a person's life. This too has an effect on a life, and the
results cannot be easily dismissed. Kierkegaard uses the image of a
sailing ship changing course through the eye of the wind.[30] It is as if
the moment of decision is that time when the ship is head to wind.
That is the moment for decision. If no action is taken other internal
or external forces will take over. As far as the ship is concerned,
unless something is done, its bow moves across the wind and its sails
are soon filled again. Now the ship is moving forward. The moment
for action is soon gone. So too, the decision, if it is not made in the
moment, will be made by influences other than personal choice.

Sartre gives a view of human freedom that is more extreme than
Kierkegaard. He proposes that the self is indeed self-created without
the possibility of reference to any divine reality. For him people are
the choices they make, and there is an overarching trajectory to a life
which is imparted through some primary choice. He states, "we will
discover the individual person in the initial project which constitutes
him."[31] The person in Sartre is considered both "being-in-itself" and
"being-for-itself."[32] Being-in-itself is the concrete reality of the

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person. It is simply what the person is factually. In addition to the
in-itself there are many things a person seeks to be. He/she has many
hopes, desires and projects. These comprise the "for-itself." The for-
itself is that which seeks to transcend the present situation, and "the
original project of a for-itself can only aim at its being."[33]

For example a young man makes a choice about his vocation and
decides to become a butcher. He learns the behavior appropriate to that of
a butcher, jointing meat, slicing it and deftly slapping it onto a clean
piece of paper on the scale. Occasionally he may be observed making an
exaggerated motion wrapping the meat and tying the parcel with string,
snapping it across his finger. It is as if he is practising at being a
butcher, as if there is a role of butcher he is trying to fulfill, a
role that will be recognized by his observers.

Becoming a butcher is being what he is not, since "desire to be"
lies within the young man. It is the for-itself. Not only is the young
man what he is not, but at the same time he is not what he is. That is,
in his effort to be the butcher he denies his propensity to be a
philosopher, and those other things which do not constitute being a
butcher.

The goal of the individual's project is being-in-itself-for-itself.
That is the task of uniting existence with essence. Since that
consciousness which makes its own being-in-itself by pure consciousness
is what is called God, humankind's project is to become God.[34] Sartre
contends that the achievement of being-in-itself-for-itself is not
possible,[35] but that life's purpose is to maintain the struggle.

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Whatever meaning is gleaned from the struggle is sufficient reward.

Since the self is formed by the choices and decisions made the individual is responsible for what he/she is. This constitutes a problem for humanity. Since there is no necessity for what he/she shall be, no determinism being involved, what should he/she be? Having struggled with that question the person discovers that whatever project he/she takes up he/she is condemned not to complete it in any way. This is the dilemma of human existence.

As far as freedom is concerned it is to be noted that being-for-itself enjoys a freedom which is not constituent of being-in-itself. This is the freedom to choose how to be in relationship to another being; that is, how to subjectively appropriate that being. The manner of that appropriation will constitute the meaning of that being for the individual. This is a radical freedom that can never be denied a person. At the deepest level it is the freedom to say "no" to that which is thrust, unwelcome, on the person.

Freedom also indicates a lack of being. Sartre submits:

> The for-itself chooses because it is lack; freedom is really synonymous with lack. Freedom is the mode of concrete being of the lack of being.36

Taking up again the example of the young man wanting to be a butcher, it is in freedom that the individual chooses his life project, that is being a butcher. But he is not a butcher since he lacks that mode of being. On the other hand he is not what he is. Within his consciousness are other desires and potentialities. These he denies in reaching for his primary project. Therefore, in this sense he is not

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what he is, and his desires and the freedom he exercises indicate an absence of being.

Sartre's conception of freedom is radical. He rejects all kinds of determinism, including the notion that God has given humanity either a revelation of value or a nature according to the values of which one might live. What Sartre does not take account of in his view of freedom is that there is something which precedes the decision. Humanity in freedom does not constitute everything. There are certain givens in the world, already present prior to the choice, and it is within the context of what is given that decisiveness is exercised. Before my decision to drive my car to the city is a situation of mechanics and their principles. Thus pre-existing structures of the world are brought into the situation in which some decision is made. A conception of interiority and emerging meanings is to be proposed which upholds freedom, but also recognizes that certain things are prior to the decision.

One of the thinkers whose work has been considered is that of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. He, too, affirms human freedom, however, his position is less radical than that of Sartre's. It also clarifies some issues concerning freedom, and provides an understanding of freedom useful for the broadening understanding of meanings formation. Merleau-Ponty's view of freedom is based upon the rejection of causal relationships between a person and his/her body or the world. He rejects the notion of such causal relationships because they objectify the person, and thus exclude the subject as subject. Merleau-Ponty

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states, "In order to be determined . . . by an external factor, it is necessary I should be a thing."[37] The argument for the causal relationship is based on a model such as that of one billiard ball hitting another and imparting to it motion and direction. To make a model like this and apply it to the situation is mistaken.

"Consciousness can never objectify itself,"[38] Merleau-Ponty claims. Thus a person does not have, for example, a working-class consciousness that causes him/her to act as a worker. Merleau-Ponty cites the case of a disabled person not having a "cripple consciousness." Lived consciousness has no place for such objectifications. The situation each one lives within the world is his/her way of being in the world, and there is no sense of disability. No one thinks of him/herself as disabled. The limitations only come to mind when a comparison is made with others, and then the subject is objectified.

Freedom remains the freedom to appropriate as Merleau-Ponty contends, "I remain free to posit another person as a consciousness . . . or on the other hand merely as an object."[39] He also rejects the notion of motivation. In terms of consciousness what really is prior is the decision, not the motivation, and that endows the motive with force.[40]

Freedom is experienced in the surge of time. Choice and decision lead to a future. An ensuing moment receives something from the preceding one. Merleau-Ponty argues, "Each instant, therefore, must not be a closed world; one instant must be able to commit its successors."[41] Each moment is marked by the completion of one project and the

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commencement of another, thus providing the arena essential for the experience of freedom.[42]   Therefore that characteristic trajectory or direction is given to a life by decisiveness, of which a person may or may not be aware. Merleau-Ponty states:

> the real choice is that of whole character and our manner
> of being in the world. But either this total choice is never
> uttered, since it is the silent upsurge of our being in the
> world . . . or else our choice of ourselves is truly a choice,
> a conversion involving our whole existence.[43]

It is through this decision, which rather than giving the details of a life "lays down its general structures,"[44] that the meaning of a life becomes apparent.[45]

Freedom does not infer total freedom since, he argues:

> We are involved in the world and with others in an
> inextricable tangle. The idea of situation rules out absolute
> freedom at the source of our commitments, and equally,
> indeed, at their terminus.[46]

Merleau-Ponty recognizes that something precedes a choice or decision and that there is always a "givenness" about life.[47]

Being and Meanings

Our discussion must take another turn, and consider the relationship between being and meanings. It will be affirmed that there is an intuition of being. Although this can be approached from the point of view of linguistic analysis, and this persepctive will be considered, the most profound understanding of being is manifest through intersubjectivity. In this latter respect the view of Gabriel Marcel is followed.

Marcel carries on a philosophical quest with the question "Who am

I?"   It is related to the statements, "The chair is brown," and "This

is a house." They are related because they each attest that something

or someone is. Such questions and judgements raise the issues of what

it means to be, and of the relationship between being and existence.

For the language analyst the word "is" in the statement "the chair

is brown" may have no more significance than a copula. It is a word

that serves to join together the subject, "the chair" and the predicate

"brown." It functions no more than as a link. But is this its only

significance, when it is more than an empty signification and there is,

in fact, a brown chair before me? What then is the status of "is" or

the "am" in Marcel's question?

It is to be affirmed that "is" has more than a copulative function,

and relates to being. Not all philosophers have found the discussion

concerning being a helpful exercise. For some the term "being" does not

signify anything, and such a discussion need not be entertained.

For example, Sidney Hook argues that just because the word "being"

exists it does not require that an ontology be built around around it,

and that the notion of being does not refer to "anything observable or

discriminable in the world, as having neither a substantive or
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attributive character."

The description is not without meaning, though a distinction has to

be made between "being" and "to be." The distinction is between the

substantive form of the verb, and the verb meaning "to exist." "To be"

points to something that exists. Fundamentally, "exist" means "to come
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from," or "stand out from." Thus "to be " in the sense of "to exist"

refers to anything in its concreteness in the real world.

Being points to something else. In response to the question "Who am I?" a number of attributes can be given. Height, weight, hair and eye color, and a variety of other objective qualities could be listed. But even when an exhaustive list is compiled I am more than these things. They are not what I am in my being.

Marcel accepts the Kantian position that Being is not a predicate. That is to say, Being cannot be attributed to anything as other qualities or attributes may be. It is not something that can be expended or altered as objective qualities could be. Though it is not a predicate, Being is the condition that makes predicates possible and is the foundation of properties. Alternatively, Being is not prior to attributes. Being is not as something unclad or naked to be clothed with properties.

In his comments upon the themes of Gabriel Marcel, E. Winance provides a summary discussion on the question of being. He begins with the observed object, and the judgment that it is, and argues:

> a)This is what I perceive (This tree, house, man...);
> b) My FIRST knowledge of This, is that it exists, is, is real,
> is a being, is a thing: c) I CANNOT HELP saying for myself the
> following affirmation "This IS, This exists This is real,
> This is a being"; d) If I did not say that, I could not say
> anything else; e) Since 'Is' 'Being' are said of, following
> the grammatical vocabulary, "IS" is also a PREDICATE; f)But
> since [Being] is presupposed by any predicate, any property
> [or] character, I shall use the word PROTO-PREDICATE.51

When a person goes to an art exhibition and stands before a painting he or she may judge it to be beautiful, and say to him/herself, "Oh, that is beautiful." Before the judgement there is an apprehending, a

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grasping of the artwork. The intuition of Being is grasped in a similar manner.

For Husserl the apprehension of being is a categorial intuition. In his scheme the act of immediate intuition is a founding act. Following that there may be an act of judgment, memory, will or imagination. These are all founded acts. The intuition is fulfilled by evidence, that is the bodily presence of the object perceived. On the other hand, there is also empty signification. I may remember the house of my childhood years, or see a photograph of a beautiful lake. Those objects are not bodily present however. These significations lack fulfillment. Should I visit my childhood home or the lake in the photograph these intuitions would be fulfilled. Not every fulfillment amounts to a perfectly fulfilling intuition. Any object is seen from only one aspect or side at a time, so that there is a situation of a rapidly increasing number of fulfilling intuitions.

The immediate concern is the intuition of being, such as the intuition of being assumed in the statement, "this is a table." Like Marcel, Husserl holds that being is not a predicate, or rather is "no real predicate."[52] The word "real" is an important qualifier. By this Husserl avoids the conclusion that being is a quality. But there is no sense perception of being. One does not see "being-colored," but one does see color. Since being is not sensuous, the intuition of sensible objects will not fulfill being. The perceptual fulfillment is that of the thing present, not of the "is." There must be another mode of intuition. It is intellectual intuition. This is what Husserl calls

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"categorial intuition." Thus he maintains that there are two levels of intuition, the sensible and the categorial. The categorial experience is a founded act, founded, that is, upon perception and is fulfilled by a state of affairs.

Gabriel Marcel's approach to being is not from the perspective of analyzing language. He does not introduce the notion of being into his philosophical quest early in his work The Mystery of Being. As noted above it is not his method, nor of phenomenology in general, to begin with conceptualizations or models and apply them to the word. Reflection begins in the concrete world. Marcel approaches the ontological questions in the second volume his work after an extended discussion of the self-in-world.

The question of being is pertinent to the description of the formation of meaning, or the weaving of human meanings. The intuition of being will form the manner in which certain objects, including persons are appropriated. Later it will asserted that being is related to value, therefore the question of being leads into the value that is placed on others. These values will help constitute the meaning of a life.

For Marcel the self is inserted into the world. There is a world of existents which precede the person. In this sense existence is prior, indeed, it is absolutely prior.[53] This makes existence the logical beginning point for philosophical investigations.

The individual in the world, the self-in-world, is in a "situation."[54] This situation has a particular character. It is open,

or permeable. Sensory perception provides the way out into the world. Thus consciousness is not enclosed. Marcel is writing in response to Descartes' notion of the cogito which ultimately leads to an understanding of the consciousness as self-enclosed. If existence is to be doubted, in an increasingly radical doubt, the logical conclusion leaves consciousness enclosed within itself.

For Marcel the self-in-the-world is characterized by a participatory relationship,[55] aided by the permeable nature of consciousness. It is a sharing in the world, though this is not to be understood in any objective manner. The participation of the self in the world is not as someone sharing a cake, or claiming, from a collection of pictures his/her own. These examples both have an objective character. The nature of the participation is rather one of being present at a ceremony. Participation in a celebration indicates that many people are present, and I was one of them. This manner of participation has no pure objective character about it. Marcel uses the example of a thanksgiving to God after a national crisis or calamity. He believes that the element of there being much more than objectivity in this mode of participation, "is the condition of the reality of participation itself."[56]

The self-in-world is not a spectator, homo spectans, but a participant, homo particeps. Marcel makes this distinction clearly. Homo spectans sees things, is an observer of objects in the world. The spectator is not essentially related to the world. But the participator has committed him/herself to the world.[57] He suggests that the

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spectator thinks he/she is participating without really doing so. The attempt at participation then is a kind of a game. The loss of the sense of participation as the way to be in the world is due to the loss of contemplation and reflection.[58] Only through the desire to contemplate, in the style of secondary reflection, may presence in the world as participation be restored.

The manner in which the self participates in reality is through feeling or sensation. As previously noted, such sensations do not constitute a sender, message and receiver model. Marcel contends:

> Feeling, my feeling, is really what belongs only to me, my prerogative. What I feel is indissolubly linked to the fact that my body is my body, not just one body among others.[59]

Marcel gives clearer definition of the nature of sensation as he rejects the message theory in Metaphysical Journal. He elaborates:

> anyone who tries to conciliate the naive and common-sense realist view of sensation with the mechanist interpretation of science must suppose that between the object and us a communication is established of the same type as that linking . . . two wireless stations. But has this any meaning? No, precisely because sensation is affection, not information.[60]

Sensation is the link, the hyphen, between the "inseparable components of one extended reality,"[61] comprising myself-my body-the existent universe, the one "extended adherence."[62]

Intersubjectivity and Being

This participatory relationship is extended in intersubjectivity. Gillman, commenting upon Marcel's position, notes:

> Intersubjectivity is a prolongation of the participatory relation of incarnation. As body, I am co-immediate with the existent universe; as self, I am co-immediate with other selves.[63]

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Intersubjectivity is the second perspective of being in the world and in the formation of personal meanings. The present description of meanings formation must account for the impact upon the self of others. It is a question of the emergence, and significance, of "we" for the self. Thus it is from intersubjective experience that the self takes definition as well. The act of asserting the self as such, and not just as an existent allows the existence of other persons. Marcel contends, "It is only in so far as I assert myself to be . . . that other somebodies, other particular individuals, also exist."[64] He reiterates his contention, declaring, "if I am a somebody, a particular individual, I am only so at once in connection with and in opposition to an indefinite number of other somebodies."[65] There is then a certain constitutional mutuality between one's self and others. The affirmation of the self as a self leads to the recognition of others, and complementarily, the other, as other, allows the self to be known in its particularity.

The way in which the self becomes conscious of the unity of an "I" and "thou" in a "we" is made clear in Marcel's use of a particular situation, the meeting of a stranger on a train:

> The remarkable fact, however, is that the more my questioner is external to me, the more I am by the same token external to myself; in confronting a Mr. so-and-so I also become another Mr. so-and-so. . . . It can happen, however, that a bond of feeling is created between me and the other person, if, for example, I discover an experience we have both shared . . . hence a unity is established in which the other person and myself become we, and this means that he ceases to be him and becomes thou.66

Further, the central significance of intersubjectivity in the formation of the self and the deep unity of the "we" is attested by Marcel:

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> The "we" reveals itself undoubtedly as really more profound
> than the "I." Despite appearances, it is certainly more
> stable (return of the Prodigal Son). What matters for me is
> the indestructability of the "we."67

The significance of the "we" is that it becomes a reference point for

metaphysical reflection. Speaking of his own metaphysic, Marcel

submits, "it is a metaphysic of we are as opposed to a metaphysic of

I think.68 The primacy of the "we" is also evident as Marcel writes

of the character of the "thou." This is not a profound reality but an

objectification of a part of reality. Speaking of the thou he argues:

> In reality once I have singled it out, I objectivise a
> particular aspect of the experience of intimacy. From the
> core of the us I subtract the element that is not-me and call
> it thou. This element has an automatic tendency to take on
> the character of the him.69

Thus, "thou" is ultimately an abstraction from "we," incomplete in

itself. For purposes of reflection, or in instances of actual

objectification, it is separated from the totality of the world, but

in reality, with the "I" forms a complete entity.

The intimate unity of the intersubjective entity impacts what is

meant by "presence." Marcel goes to some lengths to outline the proper

meaning of this word. Two people may be sitting in the same room but

neither may be a presence to the other. Rather they are as objects, but

capable of communication. Marcel considers this "unreal

communication" because an essential element is missing.70 It is

communion. In such a situation Marcel concludes:

> He understands what I say to him, but he does not understand
> me: I may even have the extremely disagreeable feeling that
> my own words, as he repeats them to me, as he reflects them
> back at me, have become unrecognizable. By a very singular
> phenomenon indeed, this stranger interposes himself between me

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and my own reality, he makes me in some sense also a stranger to myself; I am not really myself while I am with him.71

But when the presence of another is felt, that is when there is a communion, the situation is creative and refreshing. It is creative in that "it can refresh my inner being; it reveals me to myself, it makes me more fully myself than I should be if I were not exposed to its impact."72 Presence then is not perceived as an object is grasped.73 Presence can only be evoked by an act of will that allows one to be known. It is a clear implication of Marcel's point of view that the person whom I do not experience as presence, and do not desire to experience as presence will not have significant meaning in my life. On the other hand, the extent to which I do experience the fullness of others' presence will be indicative of the meaning they have for my life.

Closely related to Presence is Marcel's discussion of "with." He proposes that the ego maintains an identity that promotes itself, characterized by the triumphant declaration "I did it." This persists through adulthood and seeks to attract recognition and praise to the ego. At the moment of protest or appeal the ego is marked by a "here-and-nowness."74 Marcel uses the example of a young man at a cocktail party feeling that everyone is looking at him. This quality blocks intersubjectivity and "he is not really with the other anymore than he can help being."75 Speaking of a situation where two people find that they have a mutual acquaintance Marcel indicates that true intersubjectivity emerges:

where I discover that a stranger has recognized the deep,

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individual quality of somebody whom I myself have tenderly
loved and who retains a place in my heart.76

It is in relation to such intersubjectivity that the "preposition <u>with</u>
properly applies."77   At the center of this intersubjectivity are

internal, not external relationships, since it makes no difference to

two objects, such as chairs, where they are placed in relation to each

other, but declares Marcel, "my relationship <u>with</u> you makes difference

to both of us, and so does any interruption of the relationship make a

difference."78   The existence, and the living expression of these

internal relationships is a manifestation of the way others come to have

meaning in our lives. These observations on intersubjective

relationships impress heavily upon the process of meanings formation.

The intersubjective qualities here lifted up by Marcel are just those

qualities which mark the relationships I have with my family and

friends. That is, it marks my relationship to those with whom I am in

committed relationship, such that we celebrate our common life and plan

a common future. These are the things that give structure to my life,

that is, they mean to me.

In each instance Marcel's discussion of intersubjectivity is

founded on concrete examples. It is in terms of fidelity or

faithfulness, love and hope that he carries on his discussion. Each of

these are marked by commitment, presence, and spontaneity. It is

intersubjectivity that leads to being, according to him. This too, is a

participatory experience. It is not a substantially different type of

experience from incarnation and intersubjectivity. Rather, like

incarnation and intersubjectivity it devolves from common human

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experience.

Marcel develops his line of thinking towards being from an earlier starting point. He speaks of the need for transcendence. It is an "urgent inner need,"[79] a feeling of dissatisfaction.[80] It is the sense of something missing, a lack of something. This lack is the loss of the personal aspects of life. Modern living has allowed depersonalization such that people are treated as objects, and reduced to code numbers, functions and automatons. Conversely, machines are treated as if they were people.

In a similar way there is an "exigence" or demand for being.[81] The exigence for being is the experience of one who is not where he/she wants to be. It is a kind of metaphysical restlessness. Marcel contends:

> this _exigence_ only takes on its meaning, its value as
> aspiration, in relation to a being who is torn apart and
> suffering; or again, in relation to a being who is exiled and
> is more and more painfully aware of this exile.82

The demand for being is founded on the increasing functionalization of persons. When a person, whatever his/her vocation or career, is made to feel that he/she is merely fulfilling a function she/he may have the experience of ontological need. The functionalization of persons suggests an experience of the lack of fullness concerning life, and Marcel resorts to this word, as a qualitative term, arguing that it is:

> the fullness which is the contradiction at once of the
> hollowness of a functionalized world and of the overpowering
> monotony of a society in which beings take on more and more
> the appearance of specimens which it is increasingly difficult
> to differentiate.83

This "fullness" or ontological weight may be restored through secondary reflection. Marcel expands his own discussion of being, acknowledging that "fullness" carries with it a sense of value, and that being is not indifferent to value. The experience of being is an experience of something that is complete. He uses the "notion of perfection" in this regard.[84] For him, "Being is the culmination of hope, the experience of being is its fulfilment."[85] Fulfilment is related to creation, but not necessarily something external to the creating person. Fullness as an experience is like "that which is involved in love, when love knows that it is shared, when it experiences itself as shared."[86]

For Marcel participation in being as a mode of being in the world is not something that is separate from the individual or the world. It is not "behind" or "beyond" the other aspects of being in the world, incarnation or embodied consciousness, and intersubjectivity. These are all interconnected or interfused into a whole. It is merely for ease of development of these themes that they are discussed in something of a sequential manner.

The link between intersubjectivity and being is of central significance for Marcel. It is through the participatory nature of intersubjectivity, which might be characterized by love, that one participates in being, and the experience of being as fullness. He contends:

> the more my existence takes on the character of including others, the narrower becomes the gap which separates it from being; the more, in other words, I am.87

Not only are intersubjectivity thus linked together, but it must be

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emphasized that being is not detached or cut off in any way from the concrete world. Since Being is not a predicate or an attribute of a thing; that it is a participatory mode of being in the world, and that it does have meaning, what can be said of the relationship between beings and Being? In his writing Marcel does not distinguish between beings and Being but avers:

> Does not the solution lie in positing the omnipresence of Being, and what I might (perhaps improperly) call the immanence of thought in Being, that is to say, eo-ipso the transcendence of Being over thought?88

The implication of this notion is that, in Gillman's words:

> prior even to the awareness of a demand for being, there is an infra-intellectual affirmation of being within the knower, with the knower as the stage rather than the subject.89

Marcel's reflections concerning being emphasize two aspects. The first aspect is of being as "foundation." Marcel uses this in the sense of being as the base which allows the possibility of everything else. He concludes:

> one cannot question being since every question presupposes being as a base. And it should be added that it is perhaps impossible to determine the nature of this base or foundation [soubassement].90

He refers to this aspect of the notion of being as "hypoproblematic" since it is "beneath the level where problems have their place."91 The second way he speaks about being is fullness, as an "exigence for cohesion and plenitude."92 The "pleroma" or being-plus as the aspiration, or that which humanity strives for, is called the hyperproblematic being.

Recognizing what might be considered a duality of being, the hypo-

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and hyperproblematic, Marcel does not regard the separate aspects as
absolute.[93]   He postulates a link between the two. The connection is a
"finitude."[94]   That is, he argues:

> the point of view of an itinerant, a wayfarer, a creature who
> grasps himself as present to himself, but in a presence which
> cannot be separated concretely from presence to others.[95]

The connection as he sees it then is subjectivity embedded in

intersubjectivity. Gillman contends that Marcel's view is "that the

dimension of intersubjectivity straddles both sides of the fulcrum. The

other is both part of 'the existent universe' and, when loved, a

'thou.'"[96]

The discussion of being is salutary to human meanings and their

formation. It proposes an understanding which advances a sense of "who

I am," that is a sense of identity. It lays out the foundation from

which the self is possible, and through the choice of the self, a

plenitude which the self may be toward. Being as construed here is

closely allied to meaning, particularly when considered in terms of

plenitude or fullness. For the life which has meaning, and is aware of

that meaning, is a full life. The assertion that the experience of lack

of fullness, or emptiness is a demand for being is a corollary of the

life which lacks meaning and is said to be empty. To develop this

thought further suggests that being is the very foundation of meaning.

The importance of this notion for our understanding of meanings

formation is taken up by Gillman. He interprets the notion of being as

foundation as "the prereflective ground of all things which shapes the

individual _qua_ individual through the dimensions of incarnation and

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intersubjectivity."[97]   He considers being as plenitude and "when realized in its fullest sense through communion with others, creates the individual as _person_."[98]   It is the intuition of being, both as foundation and plenitude, which confers the self with certain meaning.

The experience of the lack of being also constitutes a power for meanings formation. It was previously noted that Ross Snyder speaks of meaning as the "future it makes possible." There is a close connection between this notion of meaning and Marcel's discussion of being. Snyder is clear that meanings are oriented to the future. Meanings congregate around the intentional nature of consciousness, that it intends toward a hoped for goal. Not every goal that brings meaning to human life is worthy. Many are selfish, they are goals that close the self to others, they may be quite destructive. But in as much as some are positive and conducive to the generation of communion they represent the person tending to the fullness of being. The striving for this, within specific circumstances, infuses the self with meanings.

The experience of the fullness of being is centered around intersubjectivity, and this too is generative of meaning. The commitment of the self to other selves in love endows meaning upon the self. Fidelity is creative of meaning through mutually shared goals and the sacrifice of things of lesser value in order to realize those goals. These qualities within the church make of it a special community. In Snyder's view the church is "a group of people who believe in each other and in something together. A people of God moving thru [sic] time with a destiny."[99]

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The qualities of meaning as expressed in commitment, faithfulness, love and destiny converge with the discussion of being. Being as foundation makes all meaning possible, and the struggle toward destiny through love and fidelity are the concrete expressions of the surge toward being as plenitude.

The discussion of being and meanings presses beyond this point. The power of intersubjectivity and the understanding of being upon the formation of the self are significant, yet there is still a further demand. Beyond these the investigation moves towards a theological perspective. In fact the intuition of being, and the meanings it makes possible point to God. Meanings therefore, are to be associated with value. It is affirmed therefore that a view based on the formation of meanings is granted a moral stance. These theological and ethical reflections are taken up in the next chapter.

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NOTES

Chapter 3

1

This is a text I wrote as part of Ross Snyder's Meanings
Formation Workshop in which I was a participant in July 1987. See
Chapter 5 for a detailed description of the workshop.

2

For full text see Appendix B.

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CHAPTER 4

The Ground of Meaning: The Holy in Meanings

and the Morality of Meanings

The endeavor of describing the formation of meanings has reached the point where theological considerations need to be made. Either meaning is granted in the context of a Divine presence or meanings are just what the individual can make of the world. The present chapter deals with the question, and answers it by affirming the existence of God, and affirms God as the creator of meanings. An attempt will be made to describe the nature of religious knowledge, and what that says about the nature of God. A further, and significant issue that will be examined are the grounds for thinking that the experience that we are talking about is, in fact, about God. The ethical implications which follow the assertion of God's existence must also be elaborated. Therefore, it is affirmed, the matter of meanings formation has a theological perspective.

From the stand point of the Christian faith community it is also legitimate to ask, "What is the role of our understanding of God in the emergence of meanings?" The approach to this question abandons purely abstract notions of God, and abstract arguments for the existence of God. The religious in meanings is founded upon the experience of God in the human realm, though no argument is made to limit it there. Meanings formation, therefore, surges not from abstract statements about God, but

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from the sense of a living relation to God.

Abstract statements tend not to have the power for the molding of
human meanings because they are removed from the existential condition
of the person. They are not intimately linked with consciousness and
its striving to construct a Life-world. Meanings emerge from lived
experience, from that which is rooted in lived moments and which cannot
be easily torn from the interconnections of the lived experience.

The Holy in Meanings

In his discussion concerning the formation of meanings Ross Snyder
offers a theological conception derived from experience. He most
frequently refers to God as the "Holy," although God is also the
"Greatest-than-Self."[1] The Holy is a lived reality for Snyder, neither
a notion of abstract thinking nor a psychological projection of human
thought processes. Snyder acknowledges his personalist tendencies and
concern for achievements of human consciousness. Then he affirms:

> So to turn to William Blake "does the fish soar to find the
> ocean? Do we ask the stars for evidence of God?" In other
> words do we read books on the first three minutes for our
> belief in God? Or disbelief in God? Blake was saying . . .
> that there is an immediate experience that people have with an
> invisible world . . . which is our ecology.[2]

Thus for Snyder there is God, the Holy, one who is experienced and known
by human consciousness. The Holy is one with whom one can journey and
one by whom a person can be drawn into the future. But the Holy is more
than a comforting presence, for the Holy can startle the modern man or
woman, content in his/her ordered existence. Snyder argues that the Holy
is the essential character of the religious life, and the experience of

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the Holy is one of power. He states, "At times in my life . . . the Holy WHAMMED ME."[3] The surging power of the Holy is captured in Snyder's description of the religious life as a journey with "the wild energies of God."[4] Humanity is not alone, for the Holy is a presence constituting being with another. All the qualities of the intersubjectivity of presence carry the the weight of those of this interpersonal encounter.

In addition to the personalist strain of his theological reflection Snyder is also influenced by the classical work of Rudolf Otto, published as <u>The Idea of the Holy</u>. Otto's work is the result of much first hand research of the religions of the world. His influence upon theological thinking in the twentieth century has included the bringing to prominence of the word "Holy" as a designation for God in recent theological reflection. Otto sought to reclaim the non-rational aspects of the experience of God. He noted that attributes given to God in theological thinking constituted concepts and, along with doctrine, they had emphasized the rational, and failed to account for the non-rational elements in the human experience of God.

Otto noted that the "Holy" is reserved for religious discourse, stands apart from the rational, and is beyond conceptual understanding. The Holy means more than "good," there is an "overplus" of meaning which Otto calls the "numinous." This stands for all that is part of the Holy over and above goodness.[5] The numinous is experienced as present and elicits a creature feeling from the person encountering the Holy.

The sense of the numinous that is inspired in human experience is

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referred to by Otto as the "mysterium tremendum." The mysterium denotes that which is hidden and esoteric and beyond understanding. "Tremendum" refers to the sense of awe, and tremulous fear that is associated with the experience of the Holy. The "tremendum" of the Holy is marked by a "feeling of peculiar dread."[6] Otto found this element of religious awe or dread in the Judaic-Christian tradition, including the Bible and later devotional and theological writings of the tradition.

The tremendum also denotes an element of might and power, connoting majesty. This is coupled with the human feeling of creatureliness against the awe-filled majesty of the Holy. Otto does seek to distinguish between the kind of dependence of the self, which nevertheless has status, and that sense of the self as dependent, and having no status. He contends that the feeling of smallness that each one has in the presence of the Holy, who is above all creatures, is a prominent feature of the non-rational element in religion. Finally, tremendum embraces the notions of energy, vitality and passion of the numinous. Here there is a direct affinity with Ross Snyder's remarks on the way the Holy journeys with a person. For him, too, the Holy is awesome, full of grandeur, power and majesty.

The mysterium, or hiddenness of the Holy presents God as "wholly other" for Otto.[7] Thus the Holy is beyond the realm of usual occurences. The Holy is extraordinary, beyond the limits of the intelligible and the canny. Yet the Holy is not merely "mysterium tremendum," it is also fascination. There is something attractive and fascinating about the Holy. Despite the awe-filled dread, humanity is

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relentlessly drawn to the Holy. Otto comments:

> the daunting and the fascinating, now combine in a strange
> harmony of contrasts, and the resultant dual character of the
> numinous consciousness, to which the entire religious develop-
> ment bears witness . . . is at once the strangest and most
> noteworthy phenomenon in the whole history of religion.[8]

The fascination of the Holy is experienced as entrancing and
captivating, even reaching the point of dizzy intoxication. Over
against these elements are the rational aspects of the experience of the
Holy. These comprise the divine qualities of love, mercy and comfort.
Otto further notes that the fascination of the Holy is marked by a
religious feeling of longing. Part of the object of this longing for
Ross Snyder is the "home place." The home place is always a
participation in the presence of the Holy.

Ross Snyder does not offer an elaborate description of the nature
of the Holy. He is not interested in a systematic presentation of who
God is; although in his work on meanings he most frequently refers to
God as the Holy. In as much as he does use this term it is consonant
with Otto's description in a broad sense, and has greatest affinity in
regard to Snyder's affirmation of the reality, vitality, and power of
the Holy. These qualities are reflected in his statement:

> You've got to have a feeling that God is an active agent in
> life. He's not just somebody that once was doing things--
> when people were primitive and gullible.[9]

Nevertheless God is not a "concentrated person" or a "giant person
up in heaven."[10] Any image that makes this suggestion requires
interpretation into broader concepts. In this discussion God is also
described as a depth, and an "ocean of potential and possibility."[11] It

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is from this depth of interaction with what already exists that creativity is at work.

Just as Ross Snyder does not concern himself with extensive formulations about God, so too, he does not consider it his purpose to develop a systematic Christology. However, the account central to the Christian tradition, that is, the Christ event, is most significant. The life of Jesus speaks to a profound question of humanity asking whether "this universe is primarily a dark, cold, alien, hostile place, or a radiant womb of creation."[12] The Gospel addresses this question, though it is not necessarily a claim for the exclusive, unique character of Jesus. For this statement is "probably . . . the clearest" expression answering this human question. Most importantly, it is available in human form. For Snyder the life of Jesus testifies that the world "ultimately and most ontologically, it's this radiant womb of creativeness and of love."[13]

Christ is transforming, for life needs to have a means of transformation. The atoning power of Christ as envisioned by Josiah Royce appeals to Snyder. Royce asserts that salvation comes through loyalty to the Christ-founded Beloved Community, which alone redeems mankind by breaking individual self assertion and disloyalty.[14] The nature of the Beloved Community for Snyder includes the sense of it comprising a people of God moving through time with a destiny.

The language of traditional formulations of atonement doctrine is not helpful to Snyder. The continuing relevance of Jesus of Nazareth for humankind is that he joins all people in the midst of their

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struggles in the world. He affirms:

> A whole realm of power and love comes and stands alongside you and with you. Also enters into and gives us power to overcome that we never would have just by ourself.15

Thus Christ is the indwelling Christ offering love and power through individuals who stand by those living in the middle of crisis and disaster. Ultimately, it is through community, the presence of Christ amidst the faithful community, that total transformation occurs. Snyder remarks:

> Christ in the midst of the world and your placing your life in the midst of Christ working in the world and Him as dialogic Indweller, and placing your life in a band of persons who are Christ taking form in the world.16

Concluding his discussion of the Trinity, Snyder defines the Holy Spirit as love. The spirit is the attraction that holds together the expressions of God. Interpersonal encounter is possible through the Holy Spirit who builds up community through the gifts and graces of people. Snyder states, "In some measure the Holy Spirit is creation among persons."[17]

Although Ross Snyder's theological formulations are not systematically laid out, he values the experience of the Holy in awesome power and grandeur. The Holy works in community, and the divine/human community is the way in which full personhood is attained. The encounter is effected through the significant symbols of the community and it has transforming power. In the context of the community the individual also journeys with God, finally standing as a self before the Divine Presence.

How does Snyder suggest that such religious knowledge is acquired?

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He is not clear about his epistemology, and it is not a matter of concern for him. However, one of his comments is suggestive of an epistemology by which religious knowledge is gained by a non-mediated intuition of the Holy. In the course of a reference to William Blake, of whom he speaks in terms suggesting agreement and affirmation, he writes, "there is an immediate experience that people have with an invisible world . . . which is our ecology."[18] Having suggested that our intuition of God is "immediate" he continues by saying that this is not merely a personal or private experience, and that part of the intuition are the experiences of other people. These are experiences communicated by way of a recorded tradition.[19] Are the experiences then "immediate"? Although there is no prolonged discussion of his epistemology, Snyder seems to be saying that the intuition of the meanings embodied in the tradition may provide an intuition of the Holy that is pre-reflective. As the meaning of the tradition is grasped there is an immediate intuition of God. Later there is need for reflection upon the personal and shared meanings that are generated by the immediate experiences. Each informs the other. The strongest implication of the reference to the tradition is the provision of a standard so that idiosyncratic meanings, that cannot be otherwise supported, are avoided. However, Snyder's description of how religious knowledge is gained is rather too brief to provide firm conclusions.

Since Snyder was influenced by Rudolf Otto's description of the Holy, is it possible that Otto can provide a basis for Snyder's epistemology, and, more importantly an epistemology of religious

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knowledge that can support the enterprise of meanings formation given

its existential and phenomenological foundations? Otto is clear about

his epistemology. It is thoroughly Kantian as he suggests that the Holy

is an a priori category.[20] According to Otto all the beliefs and

feelings that are bound up with the numinous consciousness are

"qualitatively different" from the products of sense perception.[21]

Accordingly, speaking of the mental products of the numinous

consciousness, he argues:

> They are themselves not perceptions at all, but peculiar
> interpretations and valuations, at first of perceptual data,
> and then—at a higher level—of posited objects and entities,
> which themselves no longer belong to the perceptual world, but
> are thought of as supplementing and transcending it.[22]

Otto also rejects the view that they are objects of perception that have

undergone some change by cognitive processes. He thereby insists that

the qualities of the numinous, and any meanings that they may generate

do not originate in the phenomena, or, in Husserlian terms, they are not

part of the noema. He further advances his argument of the a priori

nature of numinous experience claiming:

> The facts of the numinous consciousness point therefore . . .
> to a hidden substantive source, from which the religious
> ideas and feelings are formed, which lies in the mind
> independently of sense-experience.[23]

It has been argued that meanings are given in the phenomena, as part of

the noematic qualities of sense experience, and that consciousness is

aimed at these meaning bearing elements. We may conclude therefore

that although Snyder is influenced by Otto in his description of the

Holy, Otto's epistemology does not fit easily with Snyder's theoretical

formulations or his methodology. Beyond this, Otto's a priori category as the basis of an epistemology of religious knowledge cannot support a phenomenological approach to interiority.

So far, in the matter of meanings formation, it has been stated that the human experience of God is of power and force which can dramatically erupt in a life, and give new direction to the life. The experience of God is also that of "home place," that is, of comfort, mercy and succor. This is a place where one longs to be, and when not there the person experiences a lack, or restlessness.

The difficulty that has been encountered is to provide a religious epistemology which is consistent with the approach that has been adopted. An epistemology that was based on Kant's thought has been rejected. The task is now to discover or develop one that is consistent with the phenomenological approach. Again, the work of Gabriel Marcel is helpful in this regard.

The Epistemology of Religious Knowledge in Gabriel Marcel

One aspect of Gabriel Marcel's approach to religious knowledge is an investigation of the nature of faith. He begins by contrasting faith and opinion, although it seems to him that these two are sometimes confused.[24] His analysis proceeds by turning, again, to the concrete world. Opinion is an assertion maintained over against another person,[25] and constitutes a "seeming which tends to become a claiming."[26] Opinion therefore has, at best, a tenuous grasp of knowledge. The manner in which opinion tends toward a claim emerges through the loss of reflection.

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Marcel contends that the qualities of opinion are expressed by the convinced atheist who maintains that God does not exist.[27] Despite the strength with which this opinion is held, there is no direct experience on which to base it. He dismisses the argument that if God existed evil would not occur in the world, since the argument is founded on a human analogy that does not bear the weight of scrutiny. The foundation of this argument may be found in the experience of a child, for example, injuring herself in a fall. An observer might say, "If her mother was there it wouldn't have happened." This statement expresses the existence of a real person whose nature is known and her actions predictable. The atheist's contention, however, is based on an idea of God that presumes to know the nature and behavior of God.[28] For Marcel it is preposterous to attempt to situate oneself in the place of God.

Proceeding from opinion to faith Marcel views the idea of "conviction" as an intermediate notion.[29] The difference between conviction and faith is that the former is complete and closed, the latter open. The person who is convinced, erects, as it were, a barrier that closes off any chance of entertaining new thoughts or evidence. He/she adopts the attitude that there is nothing else that could cause any change in the conviction. Faith, however, maintains an openness towards the world.

Faith is linked to belief. It is not believing that, rather it is believing in. Believing that is mere opinion. Marcel uses two images in his bringing to light the nature of faith. The first is that of "credit." "Believing in" has the nature of opening a credit.[30] This is

not to be confused with any quantitative or material image from the

financial world. Marcel declares:

> If I believe in something, it means that I place myself at the
> disposal of something, or again that I pledge myself
> fundamentally, and this pledge affects not only <u>what I have</u>
> but also <u>what I am</u>.31

Conviction about a person does not include a pledge to that person.

Conviction allows a "self-enclosed existence,"[32] whereas belief in a

person involves a pledge to follow. Belief in another demands openness

to that person.

The second image employed by Marcel is that of rallying.[33] To

believe in is to gather together, or rally, one's inner being, that is

one's values, persistence, determination and courage. Thus Marcel can

say, "the most living belief, is that which absorbs most fully all the

powers of your being."[34] Marcel goes on to discuss that to which one

rallies, or for whom one opens the credit. He states that "it is always

a reality, whether personal or supra personal."[35] Whatever its nature

it can never be reduced to the condition of a thing. That in which one

believes, as God, is intensely personal. This reality is addressed in

the second person singular, "<u>tu</u>,"[36] the pronoun of intimacy. "One cannot

have confidence except in a '<u>toi,</u>'" claims Marcel.[37] Only the personal

can be invoked. Only to person, or to one with the qualities of person

can appeal be made. The security that is generated by the personal

interactivity, is different from conviction. It does not close one off,

it does not erect a barrier but leads one forward. The declaration of

belief in God involves a leap. Marcel characterizes it as a "bet," and

a bet can be lost.[38]   Hence faith in God involves risk.

Of concern to Marcel is the intersubjective bond between the person
who holds a belief and the one in whom belief is held.[39]   The quality of
this bond is such that in the case of belief, it never objectifies the
other person. Marcel uses two situations, contrasted with each other to
make his point. In the one a crooked banker deceives an overly trusting
investor for his own ends, and in the second, a mother does not
give up on a wayward son, despite all the deceptions he has practised on
her and others. The difference, which Marcel argues is more than
psychological, in fact, is metaphysical, lies in the nature of the
relationship. The first case is not that of two persons being in
relation to each other. In this image, the banker is a manipulator,
the investor becomes an object of prey, turned this way and that by his
guiles. In the other case the mother loves her son, and is unable to
treat him as an object. This intersubjective bond is established as a
matter of voluntary commitment, a pledge.

It follows that faith in God is an open commitment to a personal
reality who cannot be reduced to an object. It is a living relation-
ship denoted by true intersubjectivity in which each being in the
relationship is present to the other.[40]   God is experienced as the one
to whom a person would gather his/her innermost powers, and in whom a
credit is opened.

Marcel does not make a distinction between being and God, as
Gillman notes, "what Marcel has to say about God could be and in fact is
said about being."[41]   Thus Marcel offers fidelity in human relationships

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as a pattern for faith in God. Faithfulness to God is the development

of fidelity on the existential, human level. Gillman explains, "One who

is incapable of being faithful to a human thou is incapable of believing

in an absolute thou."[42]   The manner in which Marcel identifies being

with God, and asserts that a relationship with another being is

identified with a relationship to God is clear from the following

passage in the Metaphysical Journal:

> I would be prepared to say dogmatically that every relation of
> being to being is personal and that the relation between God
> and me is nothing if it is not a relation of being with being,
> or, strictly, of being with itself . . . while an empirical
> 'thou' can be converted into a 'him,' God is the absolute
> 'thou' who can never become a 'him.'[43]

Given this affirmation of the believer's relation with God it is

clear that, for Marcel, faith cannot be external to the person. It is

not a possession, not some thing that one "has." It is focused deep

within, such that faithfulness gathers its power from this internal

relationship. This faith, Marcel argues, is:

> unshakable when it is based not, to be sure, on a distinct
> apprehension of God as someone other, but on a certain appeal
> delivered from the depths of my own insufficiency ad summam
> altitudinem; I have sometimes called this the absolute
> resort.[44]

Because of the believer's own involvement in faith, it is a

mystery. This is a special term for Marcel. It is not just something

beyond understanding. Rather mystery is a situation, which, when it is

to be investigated, encroaches upon its own data. Besides faith,

being, salvation and forgiveness are also mysteries. Mystery is to be

distinguished from problem. Problem is external to the person. It is

something to be analyzed, something against which one can throw one's

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energies and solve it. Problems belong to the realm of technological
endeavor. It has been philosophy's mistake, and that of modern human
endeavor to reduce to the level of the problematic that which is meta-
or hyperproblematic.

Faith is a mystery, it is participation in being, and so not
external to the subject. Similarly, God is no objective datum, but
rather the ground which allows the subject to become. I am subject to
the extent that I am committed in faithfulness to God. Marcel states
his argument in this fashion:

> this reality to which I am open when I invoke it can in
> no way be identified with an objective datum the nature of
> which must be contemplated and cognitively determined. It
> may be said at once this reality gives me to myself insofar as
> I give myself to it; it is through the mediation of the act in
> which I center myself on it, that I truly become a subject.45

Does faith yield religious knowledge, knowledge of God? Is there
an intuition of God for Marcel? His position is that there is knowledge
of God given through faith. At times he goes beyond this, and in one
place in his Metaphysical Journal he links faith with sensation. In
the entry for May 4, 1916, he writes:

> 'Realized' this evening with prodigious lucidity:
> 1. That sensation (immediate consciousness) is infallible, that
>   there is no place in it for error.
> 2. That in this way faith ought to participate in the nature
>   of sensation (the metaphysical problem here lies in
>   rediscovering, by thought and beyond thought, a new
>   infallibility, a new immediacy).
> 3. That the immediacy of sensation is of necessity a paradise
>   lost. The dialectic and drama of sensation is that it has to
>   be reflected, interpreted--it is thus that error becomes
>   possible.46

That faith is linked to sensation is a theme to which Marcel again

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returns questioning:

> Is not belief always the act by which I skip over one of the
> continuous series which bind up my immediate experience to a
> particular fact, and treat this fact as if it were given to me
> in the same way as my body is given to me? . . . this
> conclusion strengthens what I would like to call my 'sensualis-
> tic' metaphysics.47

According to this formulation the intuition of reality in which

faith is grounded is immediate, like sensation. Moreover this intuition

is infallible. Yet it is only infallible in its immediacy. To what

extent is the immediate intuition available to consciousness? Marcel

seems to be moving towards an empirical verification of religious

knowledge, despite, as shall be shown, his lack of interest in

verification. Beyond these instances Marcel does not further elaborate

this line of thinking, but it is clear that he is concerned to establish

that religious knowledge enjoys a status beyond that of a purely psychic

event that is merely an expression of subjectivism.

The question of the status of religious knowledge in Marcel's

thought does raise the issue of verification. That religious knowledge

is purely subjective, a private experience, is inadequate. Religious

knowledge then would be mere fancy and whim and unable to affirm the

reality of God. The alternative to subjectivism seems to be a framing

of religious knowledge as somehow objective. This is embodied in the

classical proofs for the existence of God, and that entire enterprise.

But these proofs are rejected by Marcel since they tend to objectivize

God to merely an idea of God, and does not account for the fact that the

thinker is in a situation in which God, too, participates.

Marcel's reflection upon the proofs for the existence of God are

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included in a short essay. He suggests that "to prove" amounts to "to prove to" someone. What is to be proved is a set of propositions which comprise a "field of apperception."[49] Each person has his/her field of apperception and the purpose of a proof is to extend another's field of apperception to overlap more of one's own. That is, to include the propositions whose proof is offered. The proof demands that the other concentrate upon his/her field of apperception to illuminate that area, already enlightened for the one offering the proof. A starting point is to appeal to the other to discover existing common ground. If one starting point is rejected another is discovered "further back."

It is to be noted that whoever is intent upon proving a set of propositions, such as those for the existence of God, that person is making a claim and a commitment to the position. However the claim is not founded on pride in intellectual capacity. Marcel makes this point accordingly:

> this claim seems to be based not on a proved awareness of a power I know I possess, but ontologically on a unity which is invariably disclosed to the mind which achieves a certain degree of inner concentration.[50]

Despite the attempts to prove the existence of God, and the continuing discussion that they evoke, they are by nature paradoxical. This paradox is in relation to their purpose of having the non-believer participate in the commitment to the existence of God. For the person who already believes, they are unnecessary. Marcel asserts, "proof is efficacious only when we can if necessary do without it; while on the other hand, it will always seem circular to the person to whom it is

directed and who must be persuaded."[51]   Yet the offer of a proof also

has a profound effect on the person who makes it, since proof presumes

a prior commitment and belief. The proof, Marcel contends

> can only help to evoke an inner reaffirmation of the person
> who feels within himself a cleavage between his faith and what
> he takes to be a special requirement of his reason.[52]

Marcel then finds the classical proofs for the existence of God

lacking. Not only do they tend to make God an idea of God, but he

objects on the grounds that they presume that humanity is unchanged

across history, that "natural man" is a "transhistorical constant."[53]

"Natural man," rather, is a historical reality, and the understanding of

who or what humanity is, is founded upon a changing understanding of

the world. Humanity is characterized not only by evolution but also by

disintegration; and humanity is historical at each moment of humanity's

attempt to envision itself outside of history. The lack of persuasive

power of the classical proofs is due to the brokenness of the unity of

humanity with being.[54]

The process of proving involves communication between persons, an

openness of each to the other, within a concrete situation. A part of

this concrete situation is the presence of a common region of agreement.

Whoever seeks to offer a proof, moreover, must resist the position that

the non-believer's position is one of contrariness or ill will.

Accordingly, as a believer I must, it is argued:

> open out to an understanding of the other such that I will be
> able to imagine this inner attitude as it is for him (and not
> in terms of my own). For else I will be induced to think that
> something has been given to me which has not been given to
> him.[55]

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The situation in which one seeks to prove God's existence to a non-believer actually has the believer being confronted with the quality of his/her own belief. He/she faces the response to "the appeal delivered from the depths" of his/her own insufficiency.[56] When a response is made, will the testimony be congruent with the witness offered by the individual's life? There, indeed, may be a gap between faith that is claimed and faith that is lived. Some account is therefore given of the doubt, or non-belief, which is at the core of what is held to be belief.

The encounter with the non-believer is profound and revelatory as Marcel argues:

> A communication is immediately established, therefore, between me and the person who avows simply that he is a non-believer . . . this communication can also eventuate into a trans-position . . . affecting the relation I established between myself and the other; for I can arrive at the point of acknowledging that the other who avows he is a non-believer, bears witness more truly and more effectively than I who claim to be a believer, to the reality embodied in my act of faith.[57]

A dialectical opposition is therefore established between fullness of faith not realized and the testimony or witness of a life which presents the "rudiments of belief I discern in myself."[58] Reflection, that is secondary or recuperative reflection, is exercised to investigate the nature of the experienced discrepancy. What this reflection reveals is that it is "directed on an <u>I believe</u> which can be explicated only when construed in the form of <u>I believe in You, who are my sole recourse</u>."[59]

Marcel's description of the nature of the reality in which one has faith, is summarized succinctly by Gillman, who states:

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> We have faith in a reality who is personal, in a thou who is absolute, i.e. capable of bearing the weight of absolute recourse; who is living, i.e. historic or capable of being encountered in an interpersonal relation; and who is a presence, i.e. not external to the believer, but representing a depth within himself in which he participates by virtue of the fact that he _is_.60

Marcel is clear that the reflective life does, therefore, yield religious knowledge, the knowledge of being and the reality which is not external but participating in his/her own depths. But his discussion on the proofs for the existence of God does not advance a positive view of the verification of religious knowledge thereby. The question remains, is the knowledge reflective of a psychological disposition, a matter of private feeling, or can more be said? Marcel does address the issue of verification beyond his discussion of the classical proofs, and considers what one may reasonably expect of verification so that faith remains faith. For instance, one cannot expect verification to yield such a demonstrable proof of divine reality such that freedom to believe or not is denied. Faith is not to be coerced by the evidence lest it relinquish freedom. Marcel notes that the evidence within the everyday world is ambiguous:

> This world of ours is so structured that I can find around me every reason for despairing, for seeing in death the annihilation and the miserable keyword of the incomprehensible existence into which I have been senselessly thrown.61

This does not describe the entire situation however. There is another perspective to human experience, concerning which Marcel attests:

> But to a deeper reflection, this world appears simultaneously as being so constituted that I can become conscious in it of the power I retain to withstand these appearances, to deny to death this ultimate reality.62

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The human condition of the ambiguity of existence and the epistemic distance of reality permit human freedom.[63] Verification of religious knowledge must be considered within the constraints of life's ambiguities and of freedom.

Marcel adopts a two sided approach for the demand for verification, as noted by Gillman.[64] On the one hand Marcel argues that verification is not possible, and to some extent irrelevant, but, on the other hand, he does offer an argument for a particular kind of verification for religious knowledge.

In the first case, verification in the scientific sense is concerned with objects that are external to the individual. This is the area of problem and problem solving. Religious knowledge however, is "metaproblematic," beyond the realm of the problem. Religious knowledge pertains to the realm of mystery, which is not the signification of a gap in knowledge, but that the enquirer is involved in the data of the situation. Marcel avers:

> Hence I have to acknowledge that the question "What am I?" cannot be confronted the way in which a problem can be confronted; for the question encroaches on those same conditions which make it possible for us to raise it: who am I to question myself on what I am?[65]

It seems to Marcel that this question becomes transformed into an appeal which asks if there is anyone who knows the questioner and can evaluate him/her.[66] But the evaluation, should it be possible, would demand validation, and if one is offered it cannot be of the reality to whom the appeal is truly addressed, since:

> The transcendence of the One to whom I appeal, is a transcendence of all possible experience as well as of all

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> rational conception, which is but experience anticipated and schematized.67

Any such verification therefore would not be of God, and should be mistrusted. That, in fact verification of religious knowledge is not relevant to the issue, or, at least, not required is affirmed by Marcel, stating:

> To think, or, rather, to assert, the meta-problematical is to assert it as indubitably real, as a thing of which I cannot doubt without falling into contradiction. We are in a sphere where it is no longer possible to dissociate the idea itself from the certainty or the degree of certainty which pertains to it. Because this idea _is_ certainty, it _is_ the assurance of itself.68

Marcel apparently holds therefore that religious knowledge according to his approach is self-verifying. The individual who claims knowledge experiences its truth. Since verification is important primarily to him/her no further validation is required.

Marcel is not unaware that this position is vulnerable to the attack that a claim to religious knowledge on this basis amounts to a private claim, mere self-assertion and subjectivism. This attack cannot be easily refuted. There is, however, a real point at issue, namely, whether the experience is truly an encounter with a divine Presence, or whether there is no such reality encountered.

In other passages, which represent some of the later work of Marcel, he responds to this charge of the loss of the objective moment of religious experience through his insistence that humanity's approach to God affirms personal involvement in reflection. He refers to aesthetic experience, and points out that an art work is one expression of the artist's response to the calls upon his/her consciousness.[69]

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While this has no value in itself, value is realized through the work
which the artist performs. Thus the structures which comprise the art
work are presented for evaluation and enjoyment not just by the artist
but for others too. Not every person who sees the art work will agree
on its value, but many indeed may attest to its merit. Concerning a
certain piece of music, Marcel notes:

> If we are sensitive to this music, then through the poor words
> we are condemned to use we will become aware of a certain
> quality made present to us through the structure.70

Determination of such qualities, which are realities beyond the actual
notation, relies on a sensitivity to what is being presented. A certain
"ear" is required to discern these values. However, the special
patterns and movements are discernible through the structures, and their
value is established through an intersubjective process. That is, a
group of persons can agree on their value, it once having been suggested
by one of their number. Without this process, in fact, it is not
possible for value to be established.

In another place Marcel uses an example from literature and
affirms:

> under the objective materiality of a text which is there for
> everyone, there can be hierarchies of meaning which are
> successively revealed to the reader, provided he is endowed
> with a sufficient power of penetration.71

Again, it takes a certain quality to receive the meaning, although it is
there for all. It requires an awareness that is open to receive the
meaning. The meaning fulfills an expectation, a demand that is called
forth from any intelligible experience.

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The experience of being, and discernment of religious knowledge has similar characteristics to that of aesthetic value. It is not dependent upon the experience of just one person. But there is a testimony of a number of people who have reached certain agreement about the meaning of certain events. The experience of the reality has a public aspect to it. It is also one which can be shared by fellow pilgrims on the way.

Marcel's verification of religious knowledge is a call for a kind of empiricism. His philosophical quest includes a search. He asks, "Was there not an arduous way which might give access to a higher empiricism?"[72] This is not the empiricism of the scientist able to reproduce an objectively discernible proof under certain conditions, nor that of earlier philosophers, but it maintains that the structures of reality are available in the world of human experience, in the totality of that experience, and that it is attested by the common experience of men and women. Thus Marcel offers a form of verification that takes a middle path, neither objectivism nor mere reductionistic subjectivism. Marcel confides:

> there exists an order situated at once beyond what belongs only to the realm of the valid, but equally beyond what belongs only to the realm of the subjective, understood in the psychological and restrictive sense.[73]

He also makes it clear that the reality which participates in the world of human experience does so in such a way that it is able to avoid the charge of mere private feeling. Using the analogy of aesthetic experience he declares:

> One would commit the gravest error by attempting to reduce

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this reality to a simple subjective state, to a passing disposition; this would be to ignore what gives to a work its importance, its value, its virtue.74

Finally then, Marcel offers this defense against the charge of religious knowledge being mere private, psychic event. There is a reality, an absolute Thou who is encountered in personal experience, and who is absolute recourse, but also experienced by a community open to that reality.

Marcel's discussion of religious knowledge is profound and illuminating for the present concern of interiority. As do other aspects of his reflection, it includes the person as involved and committed to a situation, in which God participates. Further, it suggests human consciousness intending toward a purpose, toward meaning. The path of religious knowledge is a final development of embodied consciousness, and intersubjective participation which seeks to overcome the brokenness of humanity's separation from being. This recuperative process is in itself an aspect of the interior life. Marcel refers to this as "recollection," and in his essay "On the Ontological Mystery," argues:

> I am convinced, for my part, that no ontology . . . is possible except to a being who is capable of recollecting himself, and of thus proving that he is not a living creature pure and simple, a creature, that is to say, which is at the mercy of its life and without a hold upon it.75

Marcel offers that the meaning of recollection is:

> the act whereby I re-collect myself as a unity; but this hold, this grasp upon my self is also relaxation and abandon. Abandon to . . . relaxation in the presence of.76

Also important for the present purpose is the fact that Marcel founds

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his expressions concerning religious knowledge upon the concrete

situation, the phenomena of the world. It is the situation of each

person as lived, and the exigency of the situation which calls for the

interior life seeking a lost unity.

Although this appears to have been a wide ranging discussion, which

only after much deliberation affirmed the existence of God through

an epistemology beginning with concrete experience, it was a necessary

one. The implications of the argument for meanings formation is most

significant. It is quite clear that an understanding of how meanings

are formed, and their role and function is decidely different when

considered from a perspective which affirms God's presence, as opposed

to one in which no grounds for a belief in God could be found. Now,

having made the argument its ethical implications wait to be

encountered.

Interiority and Ethical Value

Meanings are not indifferent to value and they have certain ethical

implications. Marcel's path of secondary reflection, concerned as it is

with the unity of humanity with being, has a deep moral valuation.

Without that concern there would be no possibility of recovering the

ontological weight of being. Being itself is related to value.[77] Being

is identified with God, unlike Sartre's discussion of being which does

not participate in intelligibility, but rather is "nausea."[78]

The approach to meanings has been from an existentialist

perspective, though indeed from a Christian standpoint. It is from this

point that an ethics of meanings is to be developed. For

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existentialism in its widest sense there is no universal ethical stance.
Each existentialist thinker formulates ethics, or not, according to the
way he/she views the world and humanity's dealing with the concrete
world. Nietzsche formulates a value system excluding God, and holds
in contempt traditional morality, and its Christian influence. He
argues:

> My principle, compressed into a formula which savors of
> antiquity, of Christianity, Scholasticism, and other kinds of
> musk: in the concept, "God is spirit," God as perfection is
> denied.79

With God dismissed, Nietzsche's values are focused on the "will to
power," and truth becomes "not something which is present and has to be
found and discovered; it is something which has to be created and which
gives its name to a process."[80] Repulsed by traditional morality and
the notion of equality Nietzsche declares, "Quanta of power alone
determine rank and distinguish rank: nothing else does."[81] Values that
are humane, and indicate sympathy belong to the weak, and although these
include intellectuals, the weak are the mass, a "social mish-mash,"[82]
who need a strong leader, willing to fight, despite the loss of
others,[83] who are expendable. Again Nietzsche rails:

> We must not make men "better," we must not talk to them about
> morality in any form . . . but we must create circumstances
> in which stronger men are necessary.84

Finally, "not 'mankind,' but Superman is the goal!"[85] summarizes a
perspective on value which honors power and sees others constituting a
mob needing, and willing to be ruled by a strong vigorous leader, one of
the "lords of the earth."[86]

Jean-Paul Sartre sets an existentialist view of the world in which

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humankind creates its own values. Since the "pour-soi" and the "en-soi" cannot be finally reconciled, and such a situation would constitute God for Sartre, God cannot exist. Each person is left then to create himself/herself, in fact to become a god. Values and an ethical perspective is relative to each individual.

Although Sartre never wrote his ethics, Hazel Barnes, using Sartre's basic world view formulates a humanistic existentialist ethics.[87] Barnes does not accept that every one has his/her own ethical system according to the way values are expressed. Not everyone has made a choice, nor is each one consciously committed to an ethical stance.[88] For Barnes to be ethical is the "recognition of the need to justify one's life."[89] There are some criteria for an ethic, and these include consistency between subjective judgment and objective experience, rationality, and "fidelity to the truth of man and the Universe."[90] Some of the themes of existentialism are related to the issue of ethics as Barnes states:

> existentialism projects an open future for the
> individual and for mankind collectively. Each person will
> make himself, men and women together will make their history
> by freely chosen projects. Every man is responsible for the
> future. The ethical choice is the decision to live this
> responsibility in a way which one can justify.91

The way in which the choice can be justified is by considering whether an action is right or wrong, and whether it gives meaning and is personally satisfying.

That a person is free, is maintained, but it is also not possible for everyone to realize each of his or her possibilities. Some are

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actualized at the cost of others. This situation, which one cannot do
anything about, parallels the Christian tradition's Original sin.[92] A

choice or action that is not ethical is related to one of three

situations, according to Barnes. The first is that a person is free and

responsible, an action which constitutes a denial of this freedom would

be unethical. Secondly, each person's life world that he/she creates is

private. There can be a sharing, but there is not total participation,

communion, or merging of one subject in another. A choice which

presumes to do this is bad faith. Thirdly, everyone constitutes a

subject, though appearing as an object to other people, and in

reflection to oneself.[93] An action that denies or is inconsistent with

this also involves the unethical. Thus to treat another as only object

must be protested. Thus one cannot "in good faith, deny or seek to

destroy the Other as a free subject."[94] The ideal would be to realize

the maintenance of these principles, but since this is impossible, "a

more practical ethical ideal may be defined as the achievement of the

closest possible approximation to this imaginary perfection."[95] Meaning

in life may come through the establishment of a human relationship in

which "there is a simultaneous recognition by each one that the Other is

a free subject and recognizes him as a free subject."[96] This involves

both a giving and a receiving in a relationship. Barnes suggests that

such an ethically satisfying life can be theoretically founded on

Sartre's thought, despite his putting in the mouth of his character

Garcin, "Hell is - other people!"[97] This can be built upon two ways in

which Sartre uses "the Look". The Look may be exchange, and it may also

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be, in terms of two persons making a life together, "Looking-together-
at-the-world."[98]

The meaning, and personally satisfying aspects, of a relationship

include the new possibilities and new dimensions of the world that are

revealed because of the relationship.[99]   This puts a value on the other

person, and in the broadest sphere protests any attempt to make another

subject purely an object. Injustice, inequitable distribution of the

world's resources are protested on this basis. Thus a humanistic

existential ethics espouses a sense of social justice.

Barnes, on the basis of her Sartrean assumptions, has no place for

God. Concerning the danger that modern society faces in its encounter

with technology, she reflects that her existentialist position

> will not replace God with the computer, for it considers that
> man has made both in his own image and must decide their
> destiny, not let them determine his.[100]

Barnes rejects the notion of Being as in Heidegger, which has for some,

religious overtones saying, "I cannot find . . . any evidence, empirical

or conceptual, that it is."[101]   She also believes that twentieth century

Protestant theologians who have based their theology on Heidegger's

ontology by identifying God with Being, such as Bultmann and Tillich,

use a term which does not signify anything.[102]   If it is argued that it

does signify something, then it points to a personal God which has been

rejected. She also believes that these theologians are not faithful to

the Christian tradition as she argues:

> they claim to be Christian while denying what has been
> essential in Christianity whereas they subtly retain Christian
> assumptions when they profess to establish philosophical
> truths independent of sectarian commitments.[103]

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The present work rejects Barnes' non-theist ethical stance, and accepts that intuition within the world of experience raises issues which are best satisfied by God. The ethical stance to which this work points is founded on that argument. This parallels Snyder's theist stance in opposition to the Sartrean or Nietzchean position.

Among Christian existentialists Kierkegaard valued the ethical sphere as a stage of human striving. As observed previously it is a realm marked by commitment, and reflection upon duties and responsibilities pertinent to the individual's situation. The paradigm for the ethical life was faithfulness in marriage as expounded by Judge William.[104] However Kierkegaard's concern is not to offer a system of moral philosophy. Beyond the ethical life is that of the religious realm, the nature of, and the relationship between these spheres has been discussed.

For the religious educator Ross Snyder the ethical stance arises from intersubjectivity. A group of people become a "culture" when they "believe in something together—and in one another."[105] Belief is a commitment to someone enduring through time. It is believing _in_ someone. It is a stronger and more appropriate way of expressing relationships within the beloved community, the church, than the common word trust. The emphasis on believing in is similar to, if not directly influenced by Marcel.[106]

A justice culture "exists when one life-world is in healthy relationships with other life-worlds."[107] The justice culture is a special quality of the beloved community. One life-world being in

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healthy relationships with others consists of the growth of conscience. With regards to the development of healthy conscience in children Martha Snyder writes:

> What I am trying to do is to help him face a moral structure that does not allow a child to violate others or control the whole world. One of the ways conscience develops in the child is to meet an integrity a child likes who represents the constructive values of society.108

The concept of conscience as formulated by Snyder arises from the principal elements in his theory of self and the world. A major task of the individual is to be an authentic self-in-world. To be authentic means to be an integrity, and integrity has meaning only in a world of other selves.

There are no norms or standard structures demanding conformity. Ethics, or the rightness of action, is a part of the developing self as it constitutes itself in the world. Thus the concept used most frequently by Snyder to denote a developing ethical sensitivity is "conscience." He defines conscience as :

> Myself as deeply caring.
>   Calling me to be authentic
>   to actualize a humane existence.109

According to this statement caring must be taken as fundamental to conscience. It is the beginning place for conscience as Snyder declares:

> Conscience begins with caring. To be sure there is the need of parents, teachers, other children laying down limits to a child, but conscience begins the moment they begin to care what happens to somebody else.110

The major organizing concept for the work The Young Child as Person is

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conscience. This work portrays conscience as a central developmental

task of the nursery school years in children. The formation of

conscience is again formed in the context of intersubjectivity. Here

too, the fundamental constitution of conscience as caring is stated:

> Healthy conscience is basically caring—caring for self that
> responds to the joy of fully functioning and projecting
> futures. Caring for others because they too are selves with
> feeling, intentions, and desires.111

Conscience acts to limit, control, and integrate the forces in the

human person. Conscience adds a truly human element to the person, and

is the source of the awareness of the need for self-transformation.

That conscience is the spring board for self transcendence is affirmed

by Snyder stating, "conscience is really the only way by which

resurrection can take place."112

The ultimate ground of the ethical life for Snyder is to be found

in the Divine Life. Snyder asserts, "The Ethical is the _sense_ that is

in the words of the 90th Psalm _God as our dwelling place in all_

generations."113 Thus Snyder affirms that God is humanity's "home

place," where humanity strives to be. Whenever there is a sense that

humanity does not find God as the dwelling place, there is a sense of

discomfort. This is the kind of discomfort that Marcel might call

"metaphysical restlessness." Existentially, it means living outside the

ethical, and conscience works to "true up" that life. The formation of

conscience does not have two discrete aspects, that of the realm of

human interaction in the concrete world, and a spiritual realm of God's

activity. Snyder does not propose that social interaction produces a

conscience that is merely based on the enculturation of a society's norms.

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God is a part of the whole of life, and the formation of conscience is a single process through which God's presence is at work in human relationships, though not limited to them.

Snyder's discussion of ethics is related to his broader work on meanings. To form a Life-world requires the selection of certain relationships and behaviors to live those relationships. The formation of a healthy, or ethical, Life-world depends upon choices informed by conscience. These choices and valuations become an integral part of the lived meanings constituting a self. The ethical life itself stands for meaning in life. In this too, the interior life is affirmed.

The Ethical Life in Gabriel Marcel

Snyder's ethical reflection leads to Marcel by whom he was influenced. For Marcel there are ethical consequences of his discussion on intersubjectivity, and the underlying quest to restore the unity of humanity with being.

The ontological structure of intersubjectivity is "Creative Fidelity." Creative fidelity acquires its character from its rootedness in being. It points humanity to presence "or to something which can be maintained within us and before us as a presence."[114] At the level of human relationships creative fidelity comprises a double faceted reality. The two aspects are constancy and presence.[115] Constancy is the sense of commitment enduring through time. It is the perseverance demanded from commitment. Its force is derived from the change which comes about at the moment of commitment. Now "someone else has registered my promise and henceforth counts on me. And I know it."[116]

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But constancy is "the rational skeleton of fidelity,"[117] it is not the

whole of it. And a commitment in which constancy stands alone is

lacking.

If fidelity were only constancy it would be reduced to obligation,

duty and conformism. But fidelity also includes presence. The practice

of presence is the establishment of a thou-thou relationship. One

person is truly present to another because of the permeable quality of

consciousness. An indwelling of one person in another is the

possibility, and actuality, of presence. The call, or decision, to make

the other person a thou, not a him, her, or it, establishes presence.

Thus Marcel declares, "fidelity is the active perpetuation of

presence."[118]

For Marcel presence is marked by spiritual availability. He uses

the term "disponibilite" to denote this quality.[119] It indicates

a disposition which allows one person to be free of the clutter of self-

importance to be able to enter into immediate communion with another.

This quality does not permit objectification of the other.

Disponibilite means that one places him/herself at the disposal

of another, to be there for another. It is a quality that is

signified by love.

Presence is identified with the metaphysical value of the term

"with." To be with signifies more than the close juxtaposition of two

objects in the spatio-temporal continuum. Two persons may be in the

same room without being "with" each other. The communication between

them may be formal and perfunctory. Glances and gestures that pass

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between them may be directed at determining the threat the other may

represent. Concerning the tone of communication Marcel observes:

> the truth is that there is a way of listening which is a way
> of giving, and another way of listening which is a way of
> refusing, of refusing oneself; the material gift, the visible
> action, do not necessarily witness to presence.120

Thus, there is not just the possibility of spiritual availability but also

of unavailability. This latter exists because of alienation.[121] Some

alienation is inevitable. Instances of suffering may be remote, and a

tale of a person's suffering may result in no feeling on another's part

at all. Marcel observes, however, that:

> the characteristic of the soul which is present and at the
> disposal of others is that it cannot think in terms of cases;
> in its eyes there are no cases at all.122

Presence in a relationship bears with it a sense of newness or

freshness which banishes the formality of pure constancy. Constancy can

be fulfilled or evaluated by the completion of certain tasks or duties.

It is concerned with doing. Presence introduces a concern for being,[123]

and the enduring promise of freshness and spontaneity.

Finally, the qualities of intersubjectivity, and the attitudes

evoked by the concern to restore the broken world, may be characterized

by pure charity or love. Love without justice, though, in the real

world frequently means oppression and exploitation. Does Marcel's basis

for his ethical stance invite oppressive structures to wreak their havoc

on humanity? Is spiritual availability another symptom of the weakness

of the masses detected by Nietzsche?

Marcel is very much aware of the power of oppressive structures in

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the world. That such oppression exists is generative of his underlying theme of the broken world. It was destructive power of war that led him to his existentialist reflection. He recognizes that anyone who undertakes the task of secondary reflection and its restorative function does so amidst a world that continues to be broken.

Therefore he protests vigorously and thoroughly against all those forces which contribute to the broken world. He recognizes that these are not only personal and individual but also systemic. The objects of his most vehement protestations are the systems that objectify and functionalize persons in the modern world. It is this process that denies his description of transcendency and blocks creative fidelity.

Justice then is the demand for bringing to light and reforming those forces which deny the possibility of presence in human relationships. Marcel sees this practice as a denial of the very being of persons, a denial of personal mystery, and reduces the person to the level of the problematic.

Technology out of control greatly contributes to the separation of humanity from being for Marcel. Technology too easily becomes technocracy, and the misdirection of technology led to the hideous torture and death of Jews in the Nazi death camps. Marcel does not oppose technology as such, and he values its benefits. Technique, he states, is:

> a group of procedures, methodically elaborated, and
> consequently capable of being taught and reproduced, and when
> these procedures are put into operation they assure the
> achievement of some concrete purpose.124

What tends to happen in the world is that technique becomes an end in

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itself. At this point humanity is governed by technology, hence

technocracy. Marcel believes that technocracy originates in the energy,

both moral and intellectual, that a person expends in developing a

technique. He asserts:

> a technique, for the man whose task is to invent it, does not
> present itself simply as a means; for a time at least, it
> becomes an end in itself, since it has to be discovered, to
> be brought into being.125

The dogged pursuit of the technique by the inventor places a value upon

it which transcends its status as means. Moreover, the efficiency of

the technique becomes lost in the effort of discovery and development.

Further, for others, such as marketing enterprises, the technique

becomes a source of economic reward. In this manner the attachment of a

society to technology as an end in itself is established.

Technocracy has various effects on the world. Technology is based

on a positivist and materialist view of the world. It is the objective

perception of the world that discloses reality and this is the only

reality of any consequence. But humanity exists as a part of the world,

and consequently has been pressed into this category too. Marcel

further asserts, "Materialism did not become a real force, it did not

assume its true dimensions, until it became a coherent attitude toward

human beings."126 On this view a person becomes a machine whose value

is to be judged by what he/she produces.

Within a predominantly materialist view there is no room for

metaphysical reflection.127 The real is the objective data, and the

highest end of humanity is achieved through technical progress.

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Moreover, the research laboratory is under the control of the state or the big business corporation. In either case people are treated as expendable, or exploitable objects, to be used and manipulated for the protection of the ideology or profitable returns. What is at stake is the value of having over being. Technocracy hallows the having.

Marcel's protest was against the totalitarian Nazi and Russian regimes. The millions who died under these systems testify to the power of technique which has lost moral sense and ultimately transcendence. Such privation arises from an attitude which rejects any link with the Divine. Marcel suggests:

> these abominable techniques of degradation can be put into operation only if one refuses to regard man as being made in the image of God . . . when one refuses to regard man as a created being.128

Since there is no God, it is humanity who must make of itself whatever it can.

Another effect of technocracy is to place a high value on speed. The oppressive will to power is expressed in those who can exercise control in new regions of activity the quickest. There is a rush to develop and exploit new economic markets, and new frontiers, such as space. The emphasis on speed has driven the move to mechanization and automatization. Human labor has been replaced by machines, and there has been concern for the lost dignity once afforded the worker by his/her labor. In those places where human labor has not been replaced by machines the worker is treated as a machine upon whom high speed output has been demanded. The emphasis upon speed, rush and hurry further adversely effects the human propensity for reflection and

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contemplation. The danger of routinized living is highlighted by
Marcel:

> the sinister part played by speed, by belief in speed as a
> value, by, in a word, a kind of impatience that has had a
> profound effect in changing even the very rhythms of the life
> of the spirit for the worse.129

Marcel focuses on bureaucracies as sources of de-humanization of
persons. Because of its demands for control technocracy establishes
and maintains bureaucracy. The bureaucracy collects data and constantly
reviews production. Information is kept on people too. Life is a
series of enrollments, as taxpayers, borrowers, producers, consumers and
so on. Bureaucracy is aimed at the task of co-ordination, planning and
review, but it serves to oppose creativity and imagination. Bureaucrats
tend only to think in the terms and categories preestablished for their
thinking. No new possibilities can be entertained. The emphasis is on
following the correct departmental procedures. People faced with
dealing with a bureaucracy experience a leveling down. They are made to
conform to the system. They are known only in terms of the way they
have been enrolled. There is a great crush upon that which is unique
and lively about the person.

The development of interiority and formation of personal meanings
is well supported by an ethical stance based on the concrete world and
human intersubjectivity, particularly as developed by Marcel. His
analysis is thorough going, even exhaustive. His acute reflection
takes into account not only the personal and individual failures, but
also those of political and economic systems. He pinpoints the tendency

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to objectification of persons and the break down of true inter-subjectivity, and of "presence" as the line of demarcation for the ethical life. The result is a lively ethical stance which is conscious of, and addresses, systemic sources of injustice. In a world which tends to technocracy, bureaucracy, and ethnocentrism this is a needed quality.

Of special significance is the manner in which this ethical stance is founded on Being, that is, God. The ultimate source of value is Being. This is not something imposed on the world but is discovered by the individual through reflection which restores the separation of humanity and Being in the modern world. Meanings and interiority are thereby formed in an ethical context of the whole enterprise of restoration of the ontological weight of existence.

This chapter concludes the description of meanings formation. It has focused on the place of God, or the Holy, in meanings formation, and has affirmed God as giver of meaning. This was argued through reference to concrete experience, both in relation to the existence of God, and the grounds for belief in God, using the thought forms of Gabriel Marcel. Although this argument comes at the close of the description of the process of meanings formation, it is interrelated with each aspect. The consequences of God's presence in the formation of meanings infuses the whole process.

What is left, is arguably, the most important part, the practice of meanings formation. This will follow the views of Ross Snyder on religious education, and a description of his Meanings Formation

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Workshop. This is not a model, it is not a theory put into practice, but the actual formation of meaning. It involves real people uncovering and enhancing meanings gleaned from the concrete world. The description is helpful in that it points to, and supports what is experienced in the meanings unit, yet there is a sense in which the meanings unit is prior to, or at least less mediated than the theoretical formulation. This work of Ross Snyder is considered in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 5

Experienced Meaning: The Practice of Meanings Formation

This chapter focuses on the theory of Ross Snyder and his method-
ology for adult religious education. An introduction to Snyder's views
on the formulation of theory in religious education is also provided.
It will be shown how, by his use of a number of different sources, his
own work embodies these views. His methodology for adult religious
education, a major concern for the renewal of interiority, is the
practice of meanings formation. It constitutes a significant new
approach to religious education for adults. Snyder refers to this as
Meaning Formation Workshop, or Meanings Unit. These two terms refer to
the same entity.

As noted in the introductory remarks in the beginning of the
dissertation, the workshop on Meaning Formation represents the later
work of Ross Snyder. It was also documented there that the notion of
meanings and their formation had engaged Snyder's thought over a
considerably long period of his working life, and the fact that he had
introduced it, or aspects of the theory that support it, into his
theoretical formulations with regard to youth, children and adults.
These notations are important as they locate Snyder's Meanings Unit in
his life's work. Nevertheless it is this work, the Meanings Unit of Ross
Snyder, which is also most hopeful for the renewal of interiority in
religious education. Later, his methodology will provide a basis for

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another method, to be directed toward developing interiority.

The description of the workshop is accompanied by an evaluation. The question is not merely to describe the unit, but also to consider its efficacy. Part of this evaluation will consider the responses of persons who have participated in the workshop. Finally, this chapter enumerates other sources of influence upon Snyder's work. This serves to place his contributions to religious education, beyond his work on meanings, in a broader intellectual perspective.

Ross Snyder and Religious Education

Ross Snyder has a straightforward philosophy of religious education. He maintains that any theory of education must reflect something of the complexity of the world in which we live. This means that religious education theory will comprise a number of perspectives, it must be more than a one dimensional approach to the world. The different perspectives or concepts, as he sometimes refers to them, are not isolated each from the other. Rather, they are intimately related and they work on each other such that the whole is much more than a sum of the parts. Together they form a "multiplex", each adding to the other to produce something new, and working to "speed each other up."[1] What is formed is a gestalt of perspectives forming an organism of consciousness, something that is lively. In his work on meanings formation Snyder also uses this concept. There, meanings are said to work on each other in dynamic inter-relationships.

Some of the perspectives which Snyder deems central to religious education are, the Holy, human consciousness, interiorizing others,

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significant symbol, human development and communal religious celebration. These are a selection of the aspects, all working together, which can yield a useful approach to religious education.

The Holy, including Ross Snyder's thinking on the Holy has been given consideration above. Briefly then, the Holy is not a "friendly permissiveness,"[2] but a power, and a grandeur. The Holy is creative in its power, but not simply beyond the individual. It is also an inner presence, a "present presence."[3] For Snyder the Holy cannot be ignored. In liveliness and power the Holy not only encounters, but also confronts, a person. The creative power of the Holy also makes love and covenant possible. Therefore, Snyder affirms, "to be in journey with the Holy is the fundamental saga of life."[4]

Human consciousness in Snyder is fundamentally constituting consciousness. It is not at all like a line of punch holes in paper, with each moment complete in itself. Neither is it like a camera that merely reproduces what is there. Consciousness is a patterning of mind and heart constructing Life-worlds to live out.[5] Consciousness is related to the "I," informing it what it means to be. Snyder's language is not always precise, and he is not concerned with detailed analyses of language. The result here is that he seems to indicate a split between consciousness and the ego. This does not seem to be his general thrust however, rather he wants to point out the power consciousness has in forming the lives people live. It is consciousness that gives to each life an aiming or intention. Thus consciousness is intricately, and fundamentally, involved in the creation of human meaning. These are not

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merely individual, private meanings but become a "patterning of a culture."[6] Consciousness is a whole, it includes affective and cognitive energies, and represents a yearning for existence, for expressive activity and ethical commitment.

In his description of human consciousness Snyder turns to aesthetic expressions. He uses the image that consciousness is a lively work of art, being mindful that art serves to clarify what lies before a person, it marks the outline and boundaries and fills in its content. But it is not external to the person as when we think of an art work, it is within, and the person feels "its field of power."[7] Here Snyder uses this metaphor to describe what he refers to in other places as bringing off a life and creating a Life-world. He prefers the language of poetry to that of philosophy.

Snyder holds that it is most significant for religious education that persons internalize not only values and attitudes of others, but more than that, others come to dwell within them. He affirms that we become persons by interiorizing other people.[8] He refers to the Gospel according to John chapters 15 - 17 and the prayer of Jesus that he might abide in the disciples and they in him. This is the way persons become membered one to another, and as significant other people are interiorized, the self is formed. In this way the "I" becomes a "we" and culture is created, where culture is a people believing in something together and in one another. Interiorizing others will be considered further in the description of Snyder's practice of meanings formation.

Significant symbol is defined by Snyder in this fashion:

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> Significant symbol is an event, person, sound, movement,
> image, word which (1) is understood by a group of persons in
> about the same way, and <u>they all know that they do</u> (2)
> dependably calls forth congruent actions from these people,
> and <u>they all know that it does</u>.9

This definition is clearly influenced by Mead's notion of significant

symbol,[10] and the importance that Mead places on it in terms of

formation of the self, is followed by Snyder.

Snyder recognizes that not every word or gesture constitutes a

symbol. Some words do not convey any meaning, and have no

intelligibility. Words become symbols through social interaction, or in

the term of philosophy, intersubjectivity. Thus "to be a symbol a word

must be possessed of a sociality."[11] Significant symbol puts things

together, draws them into meaning and something intelligible. It is a

word that speaks, not merely a spoken word.[12] Some of the powerful

significant symbols that are a part of personal consciousness are those

persons who have been interiorized.

The developmental viewpoint involves numerous different concepts

and approaches. For Snyder, to be human is to develop. Development may

be identified with the journey of consciousness, it has "saga."[13] It is

important however, to distinguish between development and growth and

change. Growth tends to refer to a process in which there is more of

the same things, and in which there are no new qualities. It is a linear

ascent. Development represents new intuitions about the world, it

involves new patternings. What was diffuse and unclear becomes clear,

the hidden is revealed. New powers and structures emerge as a part of

development. In development there is a link with what has gone before

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and with what will come to pass. It includes sudden forward surges, but also setbacks. Change ignores continuities. Snyder has been concerned, in his own later years, with the developmental tasks of middle and older adulthood. Middle adulthood faces the challenges of generativity within institutions, so that there is a healthy heritage provided for those who will come later. Older adulthood looks to achieving "the peace of Christ."[14]

"Contemporaneous communal religious celebration" is one of the original contributions that Snyder has to make to religious education. It has been one of his emphases over a long period of time. He devoted a book to the theme.[15] He believes that celebration is an important aspect of what makes a people. Celebration is an event that leads or draws a group on to new enterprises. Celebration allows this to happen because it permits an event, an accomplishment, or a revelatory experience to be relived. The reliving consists of a number of personal, internal conversations and communal conversations about the event. Snyder sees that to enter celebration is to enter the epoch of the Holy Spirit.[16] And it is the Spirit that draws humanity on through despairing moments, and grants meaning. Reliving the moment in celebration allows persons to "shut down the chatter of life and prepare for explosions of fresh life of what has already been."[17] Celebration leads to discovery of depths that were never recognized before and generates the sense that something is enfolding all those sharing in the celebration.

Snyder also affirms that "Celebration is the religious mode of

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being-in-the-world," and it is the "Fundamental <u>Christian style</u>."[18] The

religious and formative qualities of celebration are stressed again as

Snyder writes:

> To celebrate is to enter the Creating and Transforming which
> is now making mankind, has made mankind, and will make
> mankind. In wonder, awe, realization, total participation.[19]

These perspectives, or concepts, interlinked and working on each

other, provide Snyder with a balanced approach to religious education

theory that will support the practice of education in the church. From

these concepts Snyder moved towards his "Meanings Unit" which was

concerned with the uncovering and development of meanings in the lives

of adults. The Meanings Formation Workshop of Ross Snyder draws

together themes and concepts which he had been developing over a number

of years. Some of these derived from Snyder's own contribution, such as

his reflection on "meaning," "celebration" and "conscience." Others

show the influence of philosophical, psychological and theological

trains of thought outside of Snyder's work.

These fundamental themes which comprise important aspects of

Snyder's approach to religious education are further amplified by his

work on meanings. In <u>Ministry of Meaning</u> he is concerned to define

meaning.[20] He suggests that first meanings are generated out of events

in the world, that is, out of lived experience. From these experiences

an individual forms, or designs a world. This world formation is the

first part of building up meaning. The individual takes from these

encounters within the concrete world their "felt significance."[21]

Meaning is further enhanced by catching the intention of this

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significance, that is, the intense moment or high point of the experience. This may be linked with other similarly intense experiences by which it is clear that "We intend to mean something with our lives."[22]

Meanings are also built and developed through encounters in small groups, a group of five is suggested.[23] People are able to help each other develop meanings because they have the capability of catching the depth of the others' feelings, and the meaning which is intended by the speaker. The listener can help bring meaning to fulfillment as he or she received "the _feeling_ within these exclamations, put into words the _existence_ situation within their minds as they speak."[24] Snyder also stresses that meanings grow out of the individual through reflection and art forms.[25] These art forms may include celebrative actions.

Snyder's examination of the nature and function of meanings is thought provoking. It also provides the background to the development of the Meanings Formation Workshop, a description of which follows.

Meanings Formation Workshop

From these earlier theoretical formulations concerning meanings, including the conviction about the manner in which intersubjectivity contributes to personal meanings, Snyder was led to the Meanings Unit. The Meanings Formation Workshop comprises six sessions each lasting about two hours. Meetings are held every two weeks. This allows participants time for preparation, reflection and writing for the ensuing session. The meanings unit is proposed as a powerful tool in religious education in local congregations. Snyder's intention is that the pastor

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of a local church and another leader participate in the meanings unit. They then offer the unit in the local church until as many as possible have participated. As participants in early workshops will provide leadership for those later, some selection of potential leaders is advised.

After introductions of group members have been made in the first session, an understanding is offered of what "meaning," as experienced in life, consists. It is stated that the most powerful meanings come out of "vivid personal experiences."[26] Since this is so, it is important that persons during their adult life give time to their purposeful working on meanings in their lives. This best takes place in a group, where the same tasks are being undertaken by all members. Where this workshop happens in the local church, all the group members are bound together by their commitment to the congregation and its ministry.

According to Snyder, the principal purposes of the meanings unit are, first, for the individual person "to become something definite before God," and, secondly, to build "the beloved community." Snyder affirms that these are the two goals of the overall purpose of religious education. The first is inspired by the thought of Kierkegaard, Snyder acknowledges, and believes that the task of the self is to be formed by decision and action. The concept of the "Beloved Community" is borrowed from Josiah Royce.[27] It is characterized by a community in which persons are membered by their common belief and vision. As individuals work on meanings together over a period of time, the ways in which the

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self is defined and the beloved community formed, greatly assist the birthing of meanings.

The supply of meanings in an individual life is important, moreover, because they create graciousness and vitality within a person.[28]   This holds true, it is affirmed, particularly in the second half of life. And it was for persons working at living out their second half of life that the unit was developed.

The phrase "lived moment" is then introduced to the group.[29]   It is from these moments that meaning is generated. This meaning fulfills a network of functions in the person besides the creation of graciousness and vitality. Snyder explains:

> Meanings give us structure to the world we live in. Meanings make possible covenant with other people. With meanings a person can hold onto possibilities yet to be realized. They tell us who we are, our identity and the life world we want. They help us to true up ourselves and to persist in desperate times. Meanings help us think destiny. Meanings enable us "to hold to the highway and let the spirit lead." Meanings give a person permanent membership in creation.[30]

Further, meanings come to be as consciousness recognizes patterns in previously separate entities. The recognition of the pattern is accompanied by a surge of energy, and heralds a new becoming. Finally an entity has meaning when it relates a person to the Holy.[31]   The Holy is concerned with the formation of religious meanings, and at the primary level "religious" refers to an intense and deep mode of working on meanings at both an individual and corporate level.

Participants learn that each person needs more than a single meaning in his or her life. A growing network of meanings is necessary

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to uncover further meanings. Snyder refers to the image of "membrane" to express the interactions and relationships between meanings within a life.[32] Membranes are essential to the healthy functioning of a living organism. Each individual cell of an organism has its own membranes, but for the whole organ to function more complex membranes are required. Membranes maintain disequilibrium, holding out against entropy, and allow the organism to function. From Lewis Thomas, Snyder explains why membranes are important:

> You have to have membranes to be able to catch energy and hold it, storing precisely the needed amount and releasing it in measured shares. To stay alive you have to hold out against equilibrium, maintain imbalance, bank against entropy. And in our kind of world, you can only transact this business with membranes.[33]

Adapting this analogy to human consciousness and the way it interrelates life's significant meanings Snyder affirms:

> Only a network of consciousness can capture the food necessary for the human spirit, store it in accessible forms, allow the the outside to come in but not in a way to destroy it and put it into significant expression in the world.[34]

As membranes serve a controlling function in the organism, the individual's meaning membranes exercise control so that all that is present in the environment does not become incorporated within the person. The person is not an infusion of all that others think and feel.

There are four membranes of meaning with which members of the group work. They are, a Lived Moment, a length of Psychohistory, Personal Manifesto and Life Saga. The Lived Moment is a moment which still holds fascination for the person. It is written out so that others can

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re-live the moment with the subject. Part of the task in writing out

the moment is to unhide the meaning of the event or situation.

Psychohistory is a series of lived moments which show that "something

was going on in the history making of our country (my institution) and

it affected my life. WHAT BROUGHT ME THROUGH, STILL WARMLY A HUMAN

BEING?"[35]   Individual integrity is brought to light in the Personal

Manifesto. It recalls a time when the subject stood up for something

and his/her presence had to be taken into account in that situation.

Life Saga records the individual's journey with the power of God's

presence.

Snyder places emphasis upon the manner in which members of the

group receive a person's reading of his/her particular meaning membrane.

The appropriate reception of the text will facilitate the membering of

the individual into the group and create a "Nomos Group," a community

that helps establish identity, and build the beloved community. The

most effective mode of receiving the text is through "interiorizing with

respect."[36]   Those receiving the text, which is the subject him/herself,

seek to catch hold of peaks of intensity in the text and the emerging

meaning of the experience. They may then put it into their own words to

see if they truly received it. This does not imply that everyone should

agree with views or values inferred, but it does mean that members of

the group try to understand what that person is saying and for that

person to know it. It is suggested that the way persons become persons

is through the "inner population of people they have interiorized with

respect."[37]

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Guidelines are offered to assist members to avoid the kind of responses that prevent others from truly hearing.[38] The first response to avoid is that of the probing reply. This takes the form of asking questions and pumping the person for more information. Members are told that a lot of information has been given in the text, and the person may not want to tell more. In fact probing may cause the person to close up and cut off further encounter. The probing may also suggest to the subject that what has been said, has not been heard. Probing tends to break down confidence, and may draw conversation away from the direction that the subject may be wanting to go in working on the meanings in the experience. Further, leadership in the conversation passes out of the hands of the subject as others probe.

A second unhelpful response is the supporting reply. By this reply a group member tries to make the subject feel better, but it denies the subject's true feelings. The group learns that "a supportive reply tends to indicate that the speaker is weak and you can cheer them up by taking over the leadership of the conversation."[39]

The third response that group members are taught to avoid is the evaluating reply. This places a value judgement on what the person says. Interiorizing with respect affirms that the truth has more power when it is allowed to be approached.

Finally, a reply that is instructing is also to be avoided. When a person responds to another in this fashion he or she is taking over the conversation and telling the subject what they should think and do. Although it makes that particular group member feel important, it makes

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the speaker feel weaker. Instructing replies tend to indicate that the speaker wants to become the focus of the group's attention. Snyder says, "conversation should not be a technique but an event."[40]

The work of interiorizing, which is quite difficult in fact, builds community and is a mark of participating in the process that makes a human being and human society. Snyder asserts it is a process in which

> we come to indwell in each other. Each becomes an internal population that enlarges both mind and heart. We are in touch with otherness that respects us; we treasure being with them. We begin to care about each other's fate and story. Warmth exists between us. No longer are we merely observers of life. We are beginning to become a Beloved Community.[41]

In preparation for interiorizing texts later, members are given practice in writing responses to an actual or imaginary situation. For those unused to this mode of response, initial attempts fall short. Some members cannot make a response, either because of a fear of making a wrong response, or from having all their usual responses taken from them.

When responses begin to show a grasp of interiorizing with respect an introduction of the first meaning "membrane" is given. The lived moment is a personal experience, lived with intensity. Because it is an intense personal experience Snyder affirms it has to do with "me," "my life, my I is at stake."[42] Through this moment the self is expanded or limited, empowered to feel more actively participating in life or more removed from earlier centers of interest, and it becomes a part of being membered with friends. Snyder affirms:

> Deep down in some of our memories are personal knowledge that we uniquely have. A lived moment is not abstract verbalisms or tourist scheme nor mere official propaganda.

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> It is personal experience. Each lived moment is partly unique
> to its moment. The intentionality, the inner depth, the
> complexity, the setting . . . is never before and never will
> be again. And even so, if it had, would be in different
> proportions. Your lived moment is unique. No other person
> had it in the same way.43

There is an emphasis placed on the need to reflect on lived moments, they should not be rushed through. This is important since meanings derived from lived moments contribute to long term attitudes, values and actions.

Instructions are given to group members for writing out a lived moment and developing its meaning. The first step is to describe the moment as it happened, or was experienced by the subject. This is to be done in such a way that others can re-live it with the writer. Unhiding the meaning constitutes the second step of the process. The subject reflects upon a cluster of questions including, "What does this lived moment tell me about myself, the world in which I live, and what kind of experience was this?" The person is asked to name the experience, and to be able to recognize it in order to repeat it, or avoid its failure. A second aspect of unhiding the meaning is to consider what the experience discloses about the Holy and to investigate what God is about in this situation. The meaning in this experience which is to be lived and the truth the person is meant to be are also considered. To conclude this text each group member puts the meaning and events of the experience into celebrative form. This may be poetry, blank verse, a summary phrase, song, meditation or an aphorism that makes the lived moment memorable. After these explanations the leader reads one of his/her lived moments as a model, and the group "interiorizes it with

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respect." The session then concludes with the singing of a song or familiar hymn and prayer.

The second session commences with members of the group reading their Lived Moment to the others. Each person's moment is interiorized at the time it is read. At the conclusion of this members are invited to relate one thing that another had said that spoke to him/her, or one thing that helped him/her. After a song the leader reads a meditation, "Who Is The Person Talking With You?"[44]

The session concludes with preparation for the following sessions. The next "meaning membrane," psychohistory, is explained and instructions given concerning how it is to be written. It comprises a series of lived moments recalling those times in a person's life when she or he had to deal with the history making of the country or a crisis in the institution in which that person had been investing his/her life. Psychohistory is a recounting of the individual's struggling with forces beyond his/her control. Psychohistory is concerned with how events, such the Great Depression, World War II, or the Viet-Nam era, affected the individual, what those events were like and what factors enabled the person "to come through still warmly human."[45] Snyder writes, "You came through / A tough-textured integrity / in a world on the move / 'What does not kill me / strengthens me.'"[46]

Psychohistory, Snyder asserts, is more than an account of some interesting events. It is the story of a struggle going on deep down that is the formation of one's personal version of a history sometimes over against, and sometimes linked with the social history of

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the time. Psychohistory emerges from the need to integrate the meaning of one's own experiences to the perceived meanings of the events of a country or institution. Thus psychohistory is fundamentally linked to human development. Further, according to Snyder it "is one person's contribution to the inventing of human existence."[47]

This text is to be written in two parts. The first section commences with the selection of a period within one's life when one had to come to terms with the forces of history making going on in the country or one's institution. From this period several lived moments are written out which express the interactions within the person and the events of the world. The aim is to explain, understand, and name what was going on at the time so that others can re-live it too.

The second section comprises a page on what enabled the person to come through "still warmly human." Finally, the meaning and experience is put in celebrative form. The leader reads his/her psychohistory at the close of the session.

The participants' reading of their psychohistories commences the third session. Some suggestions are given for interiorizig the psychohistory with respect. Participants should avoid attempting to be the other's therapist, or suggest how they should have gone about things. The intention is to learn from them. Snyder states:

> They came thru! How did they manage to do it?
> They held together in an uncertain, chaotic world that
> disintegrated and rotted many people. Grasp the central
> battle they fought, the trail along the slippery ridge, the
> narrow pass they had to find, the equipment they worked with.
> Listen to their inner speech, what they actually experienced
> and meant as they acted.[48]

The psychohistory brings into prominence the person's growing

interiority amongst the events of the world at the time. It shows the

way in which emergent meanings give a direction, or momentum to a life.

Snyder expresses this sense declaring:

> They were able to turn earth and events into a meaningful
> world which they lived. They did not lose their tradition and
> its lore... a strategy of personal existence, a distinctive
> feeling tone ... a system of language and saga which
> constituted a Beloved Community. They became "I believe
> in"... "I mean"... "I AM"... that did not apologize for
> itself.49

After a song, one of a selection that Ross and Martha Snyder use in

the workshop, a meditation is read. It is entitled That We Might

Interiorize With Respect: The Graciousness of St. Paul. It is a

selection of passages from the Pauline epistles.

An introduction to the next text "Personal Manifesto," with

instructions how to write it, is made at the close of the session.

Personal Manifesto recounts a time when the person stood up for

something and was counted "when the chips were down." This was,

perhaps, at some risk to the individual, and at a time when the ultimate

outcome of the action was not known. It refers to a time when, "I was

an integrity that can be encountered. . . . A truth I am meant to be. I

was elected by God and the situation and my Conscience."[50] The Personal

Manifesto may describe a situation which was turned around by the

person, a realization that he/she needed to do something and did it. It

shows a personal commitment not to allow unhealthy, destructive forces

carry the day. Snyder expresses it this way:

> I became "the voice that means it."

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One bit of wisdom
                    Distilled from my life
                    That I'd like people to know
                    And live with me.

               In a spiral up and around the mountain
               I arrived at an Outlook Point.
                    Once more home place was in vision
                         What our country is all about
                              the fulness of time.
                                                        51
               I have something to tell others who are traveling.

The Personal Manifesto makes the person, the self, manifest. It is
to be written on one page if possible and two sets of guidelines for its
writing are given. Only one is chosen. The first focuses upon an event
in the past. It refers to a time when the person stood up for some
principle in which he/she believed. It involves a sense of risk,
psychological and sometimes physical. The person had knowledge of what
the principle was and what he/she was doing. The writing up of the
experience may also elaborate the forces which were opposed to the
individual. This event is then put into a celebrative form, according
to the pattern suggested for other texts.

The second possibility is oriented toward the future, although
rooted in the past and present. It asks the participant to tell of
something that he/she plans to do. It is "one more battle for humanity
                                        52
that I'd like to fight before I die,"   and represents an activity or
enterprise in which the individual is called to be involved. It is not
a mere fantasy unattached to the reality of the person's life, but
something whose roots have already been planted, a work that has already
begun. It is a project that transcends the self. This too is to be put
in a celebrative form. The leader concludes the session reading his/her

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manifesto which is interiorized by the group.

The pattern for the fourth session follows that of the earlier sessions. Individuals present their manifestos and they are interiorized. After the session break the meditation for this fourth session is read. It is a selection from the autobiographical writings of Thomas Mann. It traces his vision of the public school providing education for everyone in a democratic society, and the way he pursued this vision. Snyder uses narrative links for the selections and the pattern for "saga" is established. As the reading is concluded, an explanation of the nature of Saga is given. It includes instructions to the group how to approach it.

Saga is the longest of the writings in the unit, it is a story in which God is interested as Snyder explains:

> Saga is my journey with the wild energies of God.
> The Greatest-Than-Self
> The Holy that cannot be ignored
>
> . . . .
> Awakened in me previously untapped energies,
> Set me on a journey through unchartered
> wilderness infested with creation and
> destruction.
> I am dealing with a Tremendousness.53

Saga is not concerned with incidental, unconnected happenings. It is the story of the Holy who is present and moving into the future. More than a series of reminiscences, saga is an engagement with history, and God is in the midst of it. According to Snyder:

> Saga involves both origination and catastrophe. Sometimes I
> am fighting up from defeat . . . I still mean this Saga and
> intend to journey it. . . . The saga gives meaning and song,
> direction and integrity to the whole.54

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In order to write "My Saga" participants are instructed to choose
several lived moments that show their journey with the Holy. Snyder
suggests:

> Times in your life when you felt the presence of God, and it
> made a difference in the direction and richness of your life.
> You felt the presence of God going forth with you. There
> became a continuity to your journey.55

The group member is to show the way in which the sequence of events
constituted a journey, including the internal and outer struggles that
were taking place. Finally, a celebration closes the text. After the
guidelines are presented the leader reads his/her saga.

Participants bring their sagas to the fifth session and read them
and interiorize each other's one by one. After the presentation of the
sagas and the singing of a hymn or song, the meditation given in the
form of "A Pilgrim Thanksgiving" is used. This comprises parts of
liturgy gathered from various sources and compiled by Ross Snyder. It
contains speeches by pilgrim settlers and leaders of the pilgrims,
Bradford, Robinson, Ainsworth and Brewster. The pilgrim experience is
meant to be a paradigm, one of universal appeal, and is not meant to be
specific to one pilgrim experience. Participants are encouraged to
allow it draw them into their own pilgrim experience.

Following the pilgrim celebration the group is prepared for the
final session. All the meaning texts have been shared and the closing
session is "Religious Communal Celebration." Celebration is considered
the natural climax to significant experience, it brings to completion
certain tasks that have been undertaken and lifts up the most
significant moments. It is affirmed that:

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> An experience is incomplete without lifting up with joy the
> significances, the insights into what life is about, the deep
> feelings of reverence and commitments, the Holy that pervades
> and sustains this amazing universe, the real struggle and
> battle for survival in which we are caught, the dreams toward
> the future.56

Celebration works on five tasks for the participant. First it helps

form significant symbols within the group. As special significances are

shared, interiorized and celebrated, new symbols that express meaning to

the group are formed. Second, the participant learns to share in a

Life-world that is more than the present. Snyder asserts that, in

celebration, "our attention is not just upon the present in the now but

in our future becoming. Time becomes Future-Past-Present."[57] Third,

celebration is an enjoyment of all that the group has accomplished

together, and an expression of appreciation of the members of the group.

The group has a sense of being gifted with an experience of

transcendence, because of each person's faithfulness to one another and

their common cause. Fourth, contemplation is considered part of the

activity of Religious Celebration. Snyder argues that, "contemplation

is keeping our mind on the 'is-ness' of something until its structure of

energies become part of our meaning formation."[58] Finally, celebration

brings into prominence the new ways in which these persons have

experienced the church as the People of God. The church comes to mean a

people moving through time with destiny, Snyder affirms:

> a People that has become home place for us . . . the
> laboratory of our soul making, the chair in which we sing our
> common song. . . . Once more we are membered with the great
> human spirits of many times and places.59

Each person contributes to the celebration, according to guidelines

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offered. There are suggestions for seven different forms, of which one is to be chosen. Included amongst the suggestions are a statement of the nature and working of God as it been experienced in a fresh way, a prayer expressing a dominant desire, what the nature of human being is, a cry from the world, or the group's experience of the church. Alternatively, the member may offer something that relives a moment of the enterprise they have jointly been sharing, or a moment in which the person became "something definite before God."

The final session consists of members sharing their celebration. These tend to catch up themes and phrases of group members included in their texts, celebrate the power of their human spirit in the face of threatening forces. Each celebration is offered, and received without comment. The group joins in singing an affirming chorus, "Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia" as each piece is presented. A song follows, then members are invited to evaluate the sessions. The evaluation asks members to name fresh insights that came through the sessions, whether meaning formation skills were enhanced, to state what was most important to them from the sessions, and to suggest what might be important from this workshop for the church.

An Evaluation of the Meanings Unit

The existentialist and phenomenological underpinnings of Snyder's program are very significant. They point a way for an important existentialist contribution to religious education. The thought of an existentialist theory of religious education seems a contradiction in terms, and at best a great challenge. It is particularly difficult to

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think about if the view of theory is that of an ordered set of
conceptualizations that have a clear aim, method, and means of
evaluation of progress toward the goal. Systematic conceptualizations
and the existentialist approach do not go well together. Existentialism
is founded on experience of the concrete world in its fullness, that is,
in its pre-conceptual plenitude. Theoretical formulations seem to
demand a split between subject and object. They tend toward thematized
and conceptual constructions that are abstracted from the world of
lived experience. The efforts to include existentialist insight into
religious education theory have recognized the difficulty, but not
overcome it.

The tendency in examining existentialist themes for religious
education is toward a description of existentialism, and the
interpretation of its themes to the populace. But existentialism has no
disciples who are existentialists. The existentialist posture is not
something that is learned as an ideology, or a set of concepts which one
can list, and then commit one's self to. Learning about existentialism
is not to be existentialist. Kierkegaard truly says, "The one knight of
faith cannot help the other at all. Either the single individual
himself becomes the knight of faith by accepting the paradox or he never
becomes one."[60] Becoming a self is something that no one else can do
for another. We might learn from the existentialist writers that the
best that can be done is to use indirect communication. Through
indirect communication the individual might be evoked to take a stand,
to be something, or to take the "leap." At very least the individual is

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made to struggle with what is being communicated if it is given indirectly, and may decide his/her own way of being in the world. The recognition of the evocative power of indirect communication and the rejection of systematized conceptualization has generated literary enterprises, novels, plays and poetry in an existentialist mode. However, this is not of much practical help for anyone concerned with working in the theory of religious education.

Besides talking about existentialism, the other way in which existentialist themes have been integrated into religious education theory is as conceptualizations that are then treated as norms for the nature of the self.[61]   For the true existentialist this seems incongruous if not impossible.

What must be proposed is something of a middle way. It might be better to speak of middle ways, for there will be more than one way. First, we should take note that the definition, if it can be called that, of theory just offered is very one dimensional. Theory is much more than what was suggested there. Theory in some instances may be a systematic conceptualization, based little on the experience of the world and then later, employed in a specific situation. But theory may also point to something that need not be systematic, and very often, it is grounded in the concrete world of particulars.

The middle ground must lie somewhere between saying nothing, since the reality we want to talk about is preconceptual, and the other extreme position, offering purely abstract conceptualization. Thus we are led to note that, as soon as language is introduced, then

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conceptualizations are inevitable. Some conceptualization, and some abstraction is therefore unavoidable. Sartre's notions of "en-soi" and "pour-soi," and Kierkegaard's "knight of faith" are conceptualizations. Indeed, there may be nothing quite as abstract for some as Sartre's "nothingness." Thus a gathering of basic themes, images and metaphors may suggest the beginnings of an existentialist theory, or at least, that the enterprise should not be summarily dismissed. Still there remains the dilemma of teaching something that cannot be taught. The posture suggested can only be done for one's self.

It is at this point that Snyder's work excels. His response is that one does not try to do it for another, but rather, lets the other do it for him/herself. Snyder's theory is to provide a context for something to happen. It is an invitation to see and do for one's self. Over a number of years Snyder has been working and using a number of existentialist themes. His youth oriented work On Becoming Human uses some of these themes, but does so in an instructive way. The same themes are repeated in other works. Then, in the final efforts of his working life he is no longer concerned with an organized scheme of these themes, and with a minimum of conceptual content offers a framework in which the learner discovers his/her own meanings. Certainly, many of his concepts are retained and still lie behind his work. These include such notions as "sociality," "Beloved Community," "creative fidelity," "culture," "person" and "meaning," amongst others. But neither the concepts nor the style of the meanings unit serve a prescriptive function. The meanings of certain experiences, events or values are not

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seen in the light of certain absolutes. This is not to say that he does
not pursue certain aims, or that he has no concepts for the end and
purpose cf religious education. On the contrary, the aim is to become a
person, and that entails becoming "something definite before God," and
being membered with others in the Beloved Community. But these are not
quantifiable aims and purposes. They are images and metaphors that
point in a certain direction, and each person works out what these aims
mean for him/herself. It is on this basis that the meanings unit comes
exceedingly close to being an existentialist and phenomenological theory
of religious education. Its strength lies just in this that it is a
practice of meanings rather than a theory of meanings. Although the
practice implies a theory, the images, metaphors and conceptualizations
serve a methodological purpose.

What then does this theory, which is not a systematized, abstract
theory, achieve? First, as already noted, it allows the person to
discover his/her own meanings. They are generated out of the
individual's experience, and the individual is recognized as a self who
has meanings to be unhidden and worked on. It intentionally holds back
from telling him/her how to be in the world, and precludes others in the
exercise from also doing that. Second, it holds that lived experience
is the foundation of all meaning. Lived experience of the concrete
world in its particulars is generative of all meaning in life. Snyder's
work implies that if a person wants to find meaning in his/her life,
he/she does not read a book on psychology, religion, or the New Age.
The person is to go back to his/her own experience and reflect upon

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that. In the lived world of human experience, not the conceptual world of books, meanings are discovered, and the Holy encountered. Third, Snyder takes seriously the notion of intentionality, or the intentional consciousness. He maintains that persons are trying to mean something with their lives. They are tending toward something. The intentional nature of consciousness is uplifted through the evocation of meaning in the series of texts that are produced by the participants in the meanings unit. Fourth, the basic units of experience which form the ground for meanings formation are moments as they have been lived, and often, re-lived in a person's life. There has been a certain amount of reflection and conceptualization, but they do retain much of their subjectivity. The personal elements, the human aspects, and the perspective which transcends pure objectivity, that is the objects presented to consciousness in their pure physicality, are all retained within the unit of experience for reflection. Fifth, the meanings unit is concerned with intersubjectivity. The world of the self is not a totally private world. It is penetrable by consciousness. The meaning of presence and being "with" another have stressed this. Yet consciousness is not perfectly interpenetrable. Some of the individual world remains. Without this there would be no sense of a distinguishable ego identity. Between the wholly private world and the purely intersubjective state, there lies a capacity for intersubjectivity which is significant for the development of the self. This too, was noted previously. Ross Snyder's meanings unit works effectively in this area. It cultivates the sense of presence which is

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essential to personhood.

Finally, Ross Snyder's work makes a significant contribution to the restoration of interiority, in a world influenced by a pervasive view that works to suppress it. This theme shall be the subject of further consideration in the concluding chapter.

The Experience of Meanings Formation

A small number of persons who had participated in Snyder's Meanings Formation Workshop were asked to report on their experience.[62] The questions were directed to allow some evaluation of the workshop. The small size of the group reporting makes the results of the evaluation rather qualitative, than quantitative. They are helpful in highlighting areas in which the workshop is most effective in working on personal meanings. All persons reporting were older than fifty years, and were members of, and had held office in, their local congregations. They were generally well educatd.

All of those reporting indicated that the task of writing down the texts required of them was important. Writing and sharing the texts helped build the meanings involved. It was suggested that everyone has meaning within their lives but they do not understand it until they write about it and discuss it with others. The exercise of writing texts gave force to the sense in which the person's life was professed to intend a meaning. One woman reported that it gave her a sense of courage that others had noticed, which, in turn, gave her confidence in making commitments. Another found that writing out her personal experiences helped give expression to her life of symbols. The nature

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of the texts produced also received attention. One woman who had two
graduate degrees, and who enjoyed study, noticed that the text she was
studying and sharing in the meanings unit was not external to her,
rather it was her. Others found that the written assignments gave them
a fresh opportunity to focus closely upon critical events in their
lives. Joys, and crises, were refreshed and relived in such a way that
the experience intensified the feeling of all that constituted one's
life, "my life." The sense of journey emerged for some, both as they
wrote and as they reflected upon what they might have written. The
development of values, and the manner in which some values came to
exercise a stronger hold while others' influence waned, was noted by
one woman. She also reported that she discovered that her fundamental
values continued to operate.

The process of the meanings unit encouraged an enduring willingness
to look more profoundly at life experiences. Some participants
continued to write down their lived moments after the unit sessions had
concluded. This resulted in new lived moments, and new insights about
the world and themselves.

The sharing in a small group, the "interiorizing with respect" was
a very important aspect of the unit for all who participated. There was
a common affirmation that the group work bonded the members together in
significant ways. One of the participants had just previously passed
through some harrowing experiences, during an eight year teaching
assignment. These experiences had greatly disturbed her, and had
affected her ability to relate to others, as well as adversely affecting

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her religious experience and a reversal of meanings of the symbols of her faith. She found that sharing her experiences with the group, though difficult, helped make sense of her experiences. She had a sense that what she had borne was now a part of the whole group, and therefore more bearable. She found that the group had received her, and it affirmed her as a person. It gave her a respite from her most serious afflictions to her faith. The group's meetings became highly valued, and she awaited them with great anticipation. These people became a group with whom she wanted to be. Following the conclusion of the unit she felt a continuing closeness with the members of the group, and to meet with any one of them would signal an encounter that involved true presence, or communion.

Others also reported that the unit meant the building of enduring relationships. The discussion was reported to yield a special knowledge. Knowledge came from the interaction of the group, and from that knowledge there emerged community. Others found it a new and enjoyable experience to share something of their own views and to be heard, rather than be crushed, or ignored. One of the women in the group reported that the response to sharing her experience, a response of openness and understanding enhanced meanings, and strengthened her recollection of them. It was a common response that each experienced affirmation of themselves as persons, that each recognized that she/he had been heard and respected for who she/he was. The relationships were further bonded by the fact that members who had known each other for many years discovered new qualities, interests, and experiences in their

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friends.

Another theme that was reflected in the responses was the recognition of the unique quality of each person's experience, and the ways in which those experiences were interrelated. Through the process of interiorizing others, the movement and power of others' lives were manifest. It created a sense of excitement to experience those differences between persons' lives, and the interconnections that they suggested linked their lives together.

The workshop worked on the understanding of meanings for the participants. For one person it was that meaning saves a person from becoming lost. Following her participation in the meanings unit she became involved with counseling persons who expressed suicidal tendencies. She saw a loss of meaning in such person's lives, that they were disconnected from their inner self, and that their inner identity had somehow become lost. For others meaning had become an expression which pointed to the inner purpose of a life. This inner purpose needed to be brought to consciousness, one person affirmed.

Prominent in the discoveries about meaning was the assertion that meaning emerges from the life journey. It is inextricably woven into specific moments, especially those lived with intensity. These moments, one participant reported, were occurences which made a difference in life. On occasions it was a moment of insight, sometimes a particular feeling, or an event shared with others, but together they gave a particular form to his life. It was events and experiences of the particular individual in specific situations that yielded meanings.

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The development of meanings was also related to contemplation and reflection on such events. A woman who had worked long hours in response to medical emergencies, always attuned to the immediacy of the moment, found experiences in her life yielded their meaning only after a time of reflection. Another woman found that contemplation on lived experience was important to get at its depth. The process of reflection and writing allowed meaning to arise. For another person meaning represented an evolution within consciousness. It became a playing out, a type of journey like life itself. Life was distinguished from the freeway trip in which a course is set then traversed at a constant speed. The journey involved in life was seen rather as having many stops and starts, with vistas and interest points along the way, sometimes requiring some steps to be retraced. From moments along the way meaning emerges, constantly evolving.

The important work of the meanings unit for one person was the way in which it showed to participants that their lives had counted. One participant had been hospitalized two weeks after the she had shared in the meaning unit. Another, who visited with her, reported that she had stated that the meanings unit had convinced her of the way her life had counted. This became the most important event in her life. The visitor reported of the confidence that was a part of her life. For the person in the last third of life this appears to be an important task, it was the experience of some members that the meaning unit supports this task.

A man reporting on the workshop experience related the way in which he was enabled to see his life project. In his terms meaning gave form

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to his self as he worked on meanings. An elderly women attested that meaning is connected to growth and continuity of the self. For her, meaning devolved from encounters or ideas that offered a sense of beauty or use in life.

All who reported on the workshop were expressive of the value that it had held for them. It had affected their attitudes, values and behavior. One woman came away from the unit encouraged and empowered to go on to learn more about herself and others. She visited a woman in a convalescent home who began to relate her lived moments, and both had a new sense of the value of their visits and of the meaning embedded in life's journey.

A report of a male participant was of a new valuing of relationships. The workshop allowed him to better understand his own motivations, attitudes and behaviors as well as those of others. This permitted him greater confidence and desire to be open toward other people. He stated that he placed greater value on friendships than he had previously, and looked towards this new valuation of relationships manifesting itself in new behaviors.

More than one participant reporting declared that the workshop gave them a deepened sense of awareness of God's presence. One woman of 78 years stated that she had a sense of excitement about being "membered" with new friends, and being accepted as a person, without criticism, and of the profound sense of embodying God's glory.

For others the importance of the workshop was to be found in a new awareness of life. Personal experience took on a new sharpness and

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sense of life. There were newly discovered joys in life. One commented that it was important because it meant conscious participation in the action of life.

A certain number of the responses to the meanings formation workshop were given in terms of psychological and emotional transformations that took place in the participants. Apart from these, however, there was an affirmation of the elements in the existential/phenomenological grounds for meanings formation. The responses suggest that the participants became a "presence" for the others. The intersubjective qualities of the group process established I-You relationships in which there was a communion of persons.

The lived moments included choices about the person's way of being in the world that gave the participants a strong sense of their lives having counted, of their being selves. A significant part of this was an awareness of the journey with the Holy.

The responses given by the small number of participants in the meanings unit is not meant to be, nor can it be, a basis for theoretical formulation in religious education. Its purpose here does not include that. That direction would lead inevitably to the approaches toward religious education which are being critiqued. Rather, these responses suggest that the practice of personal meanings, in the form that Ross Snyder has constituted it, represents an important new approach in adult religious education. Moreover it suggests a practice of religious education that is consistent with the themes of an existentialist and phenomenological approach. It can be argued that persons sharing in

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the workshop do not have the background and training to permit a thorough reflection upon their experiences, and that responses reflect an imprecise way of expressing their reflection. What this method does allow, however, is a reflection on whole personal experiences in their subjectivity. It offers persons a view of the way their experiences have formed them through yielding insight beyond the physicality of the experiences.

Although Ross Snyder's approach is inhabited by his theoretical reflections, his final work is to provide a practice of meanings that works with the persons' Life-worlds. The contribution that he makes to religious education is to offer a way in which interiority may be restored to the field. Snyder's work in religious education was not merely concerning meanings, and there were other sources from which he drew for his work.

Other Intellectual Influences

It would misrepresent Ross Snyder's approach to leave the impression that the only intellectual influences working upon him were those discussed above, namely, existentialist and phenomenological philosophers, and his theological influences. There were other philosophers and social scientists who provided him with concepts.

Among philosophers were Josiah Royce and Edgar Brightman. From Royce, Ross Snyder focused on the notions of "community of interpretation" and "Beloved Community." For Royce membership in the Beloved Community is fundamental to the Christian religion. Christianity is not merely loyalty to Jesus. It is based on the whole

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work of Christ which requires an interpreter. This role was filled by
the Apostle Paul, and the community around him.[63] Community is an
organism, and depending upon conditions, may become organized into
composite communities of higher "grades."[64] An individual within the
community may come to love it as a person.[65] Devotion to the community
is loyalty, and may fix a person's attention upon a way of life that is
vaster than his/her individual life, fascinating the individual by its
strength, stability and dignity of its motives and requirements. The
admiration of another's loyalty gives rise to the desire to share that
loyalty and so alliances are formed. Loyalty to loyalty becomes a
fundamental virtue.[66] Such a community is a new and distinctive level
of being. Loyalty becomes a dominant aspect of the Christian community
through the teaching of Jesus. Paul's contribution to this concept of
love is the recognition of a third being, besides God and neighbor.
This is the corporate entity, the body of Christ. The attitude of the
member of that community toward the community is one of loyalty. Royce
declares:

> The power that gives to the Christian convert the new loyalty
> is what Paul calls Grace. And the community to which,
> when grace saves him, the convert is thenceforth to be loyal,
> we may here venture to call by a name we have not hitherto
> used. Let this name be "The Beloved Community."67

Further, Royce holds that inherent in individuals in community is
the will to interpret. There are three selves involved in any
interpretation, the interpreter, the mind to which the interpretation is
addressed and the mind which is interpreted. These three are brought in
to a unit of interpretation which Royce call a "Community of

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Interpretation."⁶⁸

In Snyder the Beloved Community is the group of persons who believe in each other and in something together. They are committed to each other in creative fidelity and help interpret the meaning of the community and its members to each other. Each member of the group interprets his or her life in terms of experiences of others, God and the Christian community. Finally, the entire Christian community may become involved in the role of interpreting the corporate life in the light of its past journeys with the Holy, its present experience, and through its willingness to seek the same future.

Edgar Brightman of the Boston Personalist school also influenced Snyder. Snyder was a student of Brightman. Personalism is the philosophy that affirms that the real is the personal. The elements of the personal, such as consciousness, free will, orientation to goals, enduring self identity, make the personal the pattern of all reality. Some expressions of personalism have been specifically Christian. Snyder himself states, "I think Christianity is essentially a personalism. Personalism is inherent in the assertion that the center of Christianity is always Jesus Christ."⁶⁹

Brightman says of his position:

> The personalist, however, postulates an intensive pluralism of persons who are free within limits and whose discontinuity and interaction are sustained by the creative activity of the cosmic Continuant. . . . The world at any one moment is that comprehensive Purposer at work in a constant correlating of the activities of all agents in order that the fullest enjoyment may be attained as a basis for future activity.70

Here the person is prior to all other concerns. Snyder also states:

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Interpretation."[68]

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> There is a realm of existence that is a <u>precondition</u> of doing
> scientific things. It's <u>human being</u> that is the precondition
> for doing logical thinking, or mathematical thinking. It's
> human being as . . . as person.71

Paralleling Brightman, Snyder also declares God as an interactive agent

in the world:

> You are almost driven to the feeling of God as an ocean of
> potential and possibility. He's invisible, he's encompassing,
> he's a depth, and out of those depths in interaction with what
> already is . . . things begin to happen.72

These are specific examples of Snyder's links with the personalist

school. His meanings unit reflects the general influence. In it the

person is the capacity to face destructive forces but still emerge

"magnificently human." The vigor and vitality of the person as a center

of "aliveness" also lies behind Snyder's conception of the person in the

meanings unit.

The emphasis in Dewey and James upon the experiential is also taken

up by Snyder and need not be elaborated. Berger's term "nomos group"

has attracted Snyder's attention. In Berger the nomos group validates

the individual's world and identity. It gives a person a place in the

world.[73] Berger's discussion of the nomos group focuses on the

empirical world, Snyder appropriates this but goes beyond it. For him

there is the order of reality in which the individual discovers a home

place which has a theological aspect. In the Beloved Community the

validation which the individual receives is ultimately from the Holy,

mediated by the Beloved Community.

George Herbert Mead's social psychology has also formed Snyder's

thinking. His symbolic interactionism, especially the notions of

"Significant symbol" and "sociality," emerges in Snyder's work. Significant symbol is particularly important to Snyder in his understanding of celebration as discussed above, and his thoroughly intersubjective outlook supports the notion of sociality.

Concerning human developmental tasks Snyder looks to Erikson. The workshop on meanings formation is structured around adulthood and its tasks. According to Erikson's theory the first crisis of adulthood is that of generativity versus self-absorption.[74] This is a developmental task of middle age when a person looks beyond him/herself and tries to see what he/she has generated in others. Erikson theorizes that this crisis is resolved through loving care. Care is the resultant ego strength. Care, for Ross Snyder is foundational to a mature ethical stance, and he relates meaning in life to how one's life has counted for others.

The second crisis of mature adulthood in Erikson is that of integrity versus despair.[75] Persons possess integrity if they can look over past events of their lives with a feeling of serenity knowing that they have actualized something worthwhile in their lives. If this task cannot be successfully resolved a sense of despair claims the person. Thus the issues of meanings are tied into this developmental task. The ways in which Snyder's meanings unit supports these developmental tasks are clear from the description given above.

Another school of psychology that appealed to Snyder is Gestalt Theory. Hartmann, who was one of Snyder's teachers, recalls Max Wertheimer's views:

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> There exist natural circumstances in which what happens in the total is not conditioned by the nature of the parts or their mode of combination, but on the contrary, what occurs in any part of this whole is determined by the inner structural laws of this entirety.76

Included in Gestalt theory are the laws that parts derive their properties from the whole, that whole organisms evolve as wholes, and that individual parts develop from the whole by a process of differentiation. Further, the whole entity determines the activities of the parts.

Snyder's view of reality is influenced by this theory. For him, reality is a whole which is greater than the individual parts. His view of religious education theory, and of personal meanings is based on this approach, and for him the manner in which the individual parts work on each within the whole, contributing to and receiving the others is fundamental to an adequate understanding of all reality.

The field of cybernetics is also concerned with systems which are more than the mere sum of their parts. This branch of study is primarily concerned with self-regulating systems of communication and control in living organisms and machines. Snyder is interested in this, and has been drawn to Lovelock's work Gaia.77 Lovelock has difficulty in accepting that the narrow band of tolerances essential for life on earth as we know it is maintained merely by chance. The way in which excesses are controlled and regulated near optimum levels suggests to him a "mind" at work. This is Gaia.

A total system including all of human consciousness as well as the natural world directs Snyder's thinking. It provides the context for

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personal meanings within an overall Meaning. For Snyder, the elements within all that has meaning are not discrete, but, intricately interrelated. Each receives from and contributes to the other. It is within this frame of thought that the _Gaia_ principle gains significance for him. It provides a way for his own thinking of the interconnectedness of all reality to move ahead.

Snyder uses a wide variety of thinking for his own formulations. As noted earlier, this is based on his conviction that an adequate view of reality must include a variety of perspectives. One or two alone is not sufficient to deal with the intricacies of the world. Each of these perspectives work on the others and produce a more complex whole. At times it seems that his sources are philosophically at odds with each other. Ultimately this appearance does not concern Snyder. Concepts, words, and phrases that catch the liveliness of the world and human consciousness, and therefore snag meanings for him are put to use, even if this use is different from the original context. This gives Ross Snyder's approach to religious education energy, and makes it thought provoking.

While this chapter has given prominence to the meanings unit of Ross Snyder, it has also been concerned to see him in a wider intellectual framework. It was for this reason that his views concerning methodology in religious education were included in the early part of the chapter, and that consideration of other significant influences upon him was also given. However, for the purposes of the development of interiority his Meanings Unit is most significant. The

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next, and concluding, chapter centers on the development of a design, based on Snyder's method, for nurturing and sustaining the inner life.

NOTES

Chapter 5

[1]
    Snyder and Snyder, <u>Ross and Martha Snyder at STC</u>, videocassette
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[2] Snyder and Snyder, videocassette 1.

[3]
    Snyder and Snyder, videocassette 1.

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    Snyder and Snyder, videocassette 1.

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    Snyder and Snyder, dideocassette 1.

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[8]
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[9]
    Snyder, <u>Contemporary Celebration</u>, 63.

[10]
    George Herbert Mead, <u>On Social Psychology</u>, ed. Anselm Strauss
(Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1977), 166-169.

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    Snyder and Snyder, videocassette 1.

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[13]
    Snyder and Snyder, videocassette 1.

[14]
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    Snyder and Snyder, videocassette 1.

[18]
    Snyder, "Ministry of Meaning," 185.

[19]
    Snyder, <u>Contemporary Celebration</u>, 31.

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Snyder and Snyder, "Meaning Formation."

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Snyder and Snyder, "Meaning Formation."

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Snyder and Snyder, "Meaning Formation."

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This meditation includes sections from Snyder, "The Ministry of Meaning," 171-174, with a change in gender of personal pronouns.

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Snyder and Snyder, "Meaning Formation."

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Snyder and Snyder, "Meaning Formation."

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Snyder and Snyder, "Meaning Formation."

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Soren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling and Repetition, 71.

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See, for example, Sherrill, Gift of Power.

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During the course of research of Snyder's Meanings Formation Workshop, 17 contacts were given to me. These were of participants in the workshop. Of these 10 responded to questions concerning their experience of the workshop and its value.

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Snyder, "Theological Frame," p. 2.

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CHAPTER 6

Practising Interiority

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This concluding chapter outlines a design for developing
interiority. It is based on Snyder's workshop, and takes meanings as a
key to the nurture of the inner life. Snyder's work is foundational
because it focuses upon lived experience. The beginning of meanings and
interiority, it is maintained, is located in the concrete world. This
makes Snyder's work especially useful. It also assumes that one source
of interiority is the faith tradition of the individual. Although
Snyder's work is acknowledged as providing a way to arrive at
interiority, this proposal goes beyond Snyder by its use of the Biblical
tradition in a significant step in the restoration of interiority.
Throughout the description of the formation of meanings emphasis was
placed on perception of the concrete world. It was affirmed that
meanings have their origins in the lived experience of the world. For
members of the Christian faith community this includes encounter with
the Biblical proclamation, in its rich variety of literary form. For
many persons this has been encounter upon encounter over a long period
of time. The stories of the nativity of Jesus are heard as a child, as
a youth and as an adult. Each hearing embeds a layer of meaning in the
experience of the individual. Each encounter modifies the appropriation
of the passage in particular ways. Sometimes the changes may be barely
perceptible, and at other times the changes may be more marked. Not

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only are these experiences important for the inner life of the individual, but they also affirm that this approach takes seriously the historical and objective elements of the Christian tradition. The reflection of this approach is not solipsistic, nor does it generate a world from the life of the mind. It is fundamentally rooted in the whole of the individual's experience.

The methodology to be proposed will focus upon the Biblical material in two ways. Persons participating in it will seek to identify a Biblical passage whose sensed meaning parallels the significance of their own lived experience. It is not expected that these be identical. However, it is intended that the person have opportunity to investigate ways in which aspects of the felt significance of the two texts, that of the individual's life, and that of the Scripture, share a common meaning for the individual. Then the participant will be asked to discover in what ways the Biblical material may enhance the meaning of the life experience, and how the life experience may, in its turn, speak to the Biblical material. Thus the method offered here will seek to bring into conscious dialogue elements of the person's inner life which may not have been brought together before.

Further, this outline proposes that the greater task of renewing interiority is that of maintaining the interior life. The process of maintenance will center around continuing the practice of recording certain life experiences and working on their meanings, as well as considering a style of living that supports the inner life. Before passing on to that design, however, some comments about the relationship

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between the description of the development of interiority, and the
practice of interiority are appropriate.

A final chapter which proposes a certain type of practice of
religious education, following chapters of a conceptual and theoretical
nature, may seem to suggest that a theory to practice approach to
religious education is being advocated. This is not so. Theory
construction and then application of that theory in the learning
situation is not what the practice of interiority is about. The same
might be said for Snyder's Meanings Formation Workshop. In fact it is
the practice of interiority that is most basic. It is the primary
aspect of the enterprise. The organization of this work might well have
had the practice first, and then have allowed the philosophical
foundations of the phenomenological and existentialist approaches be
reflections upon the practice. These are meant to be descriptive of
concrete experience, using the themes of a certain type of philosophical
approach. The practice of interiority is founded on experience, and the
nurture of interiority sends the person back to his/her own experience.
This is not in any way dependent upon pre-existing conceptualizations.
As has been explained previously, the articulation of the experience,
through language, introduces some conceptualization. However, this is
based on the data of experience, it is not a pre-existing structure of
the mind, neither does it have a systematized form. It is, of course,
given some boundary, though not systematization, by the limits of
perception.

The practice of interiority as suggested here is an invitation to

phenomenology. It is grounded in the phenomena of experience, of perception, and directed toward the meaning of experience and its enhancement. Further, it is concerned to establish this as a style of reflection to restore interiority in religious education. Thus the practice which involves the bringing to light layers of meaning embedded in concrete experience is not an "add on" to the theory. It is not an option for a phenomenological method. It is hoped that phenomenology will not just be something which a person learns about by going to a library and reading up on the thoughts and works of leading exponents in the field. Rather, may it become something one does, and it does not ultimately matter if a person learns the word "phenomenology" or not.

While a primary emphasis will be placed on the individual's selection and uncovering of meaning in his/her lived experience, the intersubjective qualities involved in a group receiving the text will be of great importance for the cultivation of interiority. The practice of interiority being suggested here is not an isolated reflection, but also the reflection of a community both past and present.

Further, the discovery and evocation of interiority does not amount to a teacher/student situation of instruction aimed at the transfer of a certain "amount" of knowledge from teacher to pupil. The learning situation is the lived experience recalled and internalized within a group. As previously noted, it will be suggested that the enhancement of the meaning of the lived experience will also involve a dialogical encounter with the religious tradition of the individual, and specifically, for the Christian, with Scriptural texts.

This practice will give particular attention to the method of Ross Snyder, and be formed from the insights and achievements of his manner of meanings formation. The practice of meanings formation is not thereby superceded, rather the focus of the lived experience and the group interaction surrounding that lived experience is extended. It is directed to the rediscovery and cultivation of interiority in an atmosphere that has tended to suppress it. The discovery of meaning will come to serve this wider task.

A structure for this task will be suggested, taking Snyder's method into account. Further, comments and suggestions concerning how this structure might support an actual group working on interiority will be included. This will be concerned with the <u>how</u> of allowing interiority to come to life in a group within the local church. The structure and the comments will be integrated.

Discovering Interiority

It is not necessary to use the word "interiority" with a group gathered to work on interiority. It may become, in fact, an obstacle to moving a group along in the practice of interiority, especially when considering working with a group some of whose members have had limited opportunities for formal education, and who feel self-conscious about that situation. It may be avoided by a group facilitator using language that conveys the sense of discovering things about ourselves that have not been thought about. On the other hand, interiority does adequately describe what the group is about. Its significance can be grasped, and its meaning experienced.

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One way in which this has been done was by preparing a simulated
bureaucratic form from a government, corporate or financial agency.
There was space for all the usual biographical data required by such a
form that these agencies use for their enrollment of persons. In
addition some other information of a more specialized nature was called
for, such as would fulfill the purposes of a particular kind of
bureaucracy. A volunteer member of the group was sought to have
information of his/her life filled onto the "form." All the questions
were answered and all the spaces filled in. It was a simulation of what
happens many times in a person's life. Then the person was asked, "Is
this your life?" The other members were asked to imagine their names
and information about their lives being included on the form, and were
asked whether this would be their lives. There was an uneasy feeling.
Some things about their lives were included, but this was not their
lives. They were then asked, "What other things constitute your lives?"
A lot of other information was given in response to this. But even when
all this was taken into consideration the consensus was that their lives
were still more than this. This conviction extended to include
everything whatever that might be written about them, but it would still
not be them. Through this discussion they also discovered values and
attitudes or stances toward life's circumstances that could not be given
adequate expression. These things too were part of them. Members were
then asked to consider these elements as pointing toward their interior
life.

Here it must be reemphasized that this is not merely the life of

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the mind. The mind is not a disembodied entity without historicity.
The mind is incarnate, it is, as has been noted, embodied consciousness.
Interiority includes the notion of the embodied consciousness inserted
in the world. There is no interiority, for the purposes of this
argument, that is detached from existence. It was possible for members
of the group gathered to experience, at least fragmentarily,
interiority.

There are six movements suggested for the practice of interiority.
Some of these are accomplished by the individual working alone and some
as a participant in a group.

The Intentional Moment

Snyder's structure for meanings formation based upon the lived
moment is adapted for the cultivation of interiority. Group members
learn that interiority is founded upon certain moments of lived
experience. They are moments lived with intensity. Moments in which
there was no possibility of doing something else or thinking about
something else at the same time. These moments involved the whole of
one's being, mind and body were focused on the events of those times.
Therefore they will be moments which will have so impressed the
individual that since those moments, their thoughts, in moments of
reflection have returned to them from time to time.

For interiority this is the "Intentional Moment."[1] The intentional
moment may be a single moment lived with great intensity. Alternatively
it may be a series of moments, lived over a more extended time period.
In either case they were moments when important things were happening

for the individual, when the person's identity was at stake, and when meanings were being formed. It is an _intentional_ moment because it has been a focus of the mind's attention; an aiming point for the mind questing after what meaning the moment will yield. It is the terminal point for the intentional consciousness, whenever the experience has been called to mind.

It is a moment in two ways. It declares that those elements which give form to a life are not unattached from the spatio-temporal continuum of human existence. The moment is a moment in space-time. Whatever that person comes to be is rooted in history. Although for the individual the intentional moment may be a series of moments each lived with intensity, the term "moment" conveys this existential quality.

The second way of understanding "moment" is from physics. A moment has to do with the application of force, as in "momentum." A lever becomes a moment arm, an instrument applying force to an object. The intentional moment has something of this quality. It imparts a surge of energy, a molding power or force to a life. This is derived from the intentional nature of human consciousness. It is aiming at something. It is aiming at meanings, and the meaning disclosed by the event, involving the subject in his/her Life-world, imparts a certain force to a life. This surge, accorded by the intelligibility of the experience, is implied by the term "project," discussed above as part of Sartre's description of the human situation.

Working with persons on interiority has shown that participants generally do not have any trouble discovering the intentional moment

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which they will be asked to write out. Although their individual circumstances cover a very wide range of situations, and the qualities of the experiences, whether positive and inspiring or negative and terrifying, also vary, it seems that every adult person has one, if not many. As the intentional moment is explained to a group and then members are asked if they understand what is required, many times members have their moment already in mind.

Unlike the meanings formation workshop, the participants will produce only one text of this nature. The intentional moment may be similar to any one of the texts, "lived moment," "psychohistory," "personal manifesto," or "saga," or it may combine elements of some or all of them. Most of those that have been produced by groups have in fact involved a series of lived moments.

The members are asked to write their intentional moment in such a way that others may be able to live the moment with the subject. The "peaks of aliveness" in the intentional moment are detailed by the nature of the incident recounted, and reference to the state of mind of those involved. The writing of the experience asks the individual to disclose the meaning of the experience. Each one responds to such questions as, "What did the experience tell me about the world, about myself and about God?" As the group members write what they understood the experience was about, in terms of their lives, their character, their developing as an integrity, and their journey with the Holy, significances are raised that transcend the telling of the stories of a life. The intentional moments are not a series of unrelated accounts of

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events, but are linked together by the webs of meaning that grow from them. At the end of the written moment the participant is encouraged to include a summary phrase, or some blank verse that celebrates the meanings that have been worked on through the recorded intentional moment.

Snyder's distinction between lived, or intentional moments, and merely telling the "story of my life," is to be affirmed.[2] The meanings that are generative of interiority are the expression of a more profound reflection upon experience than is signified than story telling. Story telling may be both entertaining and colorful, and may give a sense of a person's roots, however it is the aiming at meanings of the experience that nurtures interiority. This is a process that takes place over a more extended time span. Meanings grow as a series of experiences work on, and enhance, emerging meanings.

Interiorizing the Intentional Moment

Having discovered and written up intentional moments group members come together to share them, and help others re-live the moment with them. Some time is taken before the reading of the moments to discuss the notion of "interiorizing with respect." This follows the direction suggested by Snyder. Members are encouraged to understand the presented intentional moment in terms of a gift that is offered. It is not merely any kind of gift, but one that is valued, a gift of the person him/herself. This is not the person as object, but the interiority of the person, in his/her vulnerability. The person is also an integrity to be received. The process of interiorizing with respect is to allow

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the receiving of the person including the fullness of that person's interior life. It might be recalled that the manner by which persons indwell each other through interiorizing with respect is possible through what Marcel has referred to as the permeability of consciousness. Intersubjectivity is a possibility because of this quality of human consciousness. Again, it is not a perfect permeability, individual identity and a considerable degree of continuity in that identity, is still maintained.

The responses to the moment which impede receiving the other, or interiorizing with respect, are learnt in a group. Often members offer incidents in which they have exercised or met with these responses. They affirm the manner in which such responses effectively bring conversation to a conclusion. In addition to the unhelpful responses noted by Snyder, some participants have suggested a further distracting response. It is the intrusive response. This takes the form of a person hearing another's experience replying that he/she too, had exactly the same kind of experience, knows just what it was like for the subject and rushes on to tell of his/her own experience. Focus is then taken away from the subject and everyone's attention demanded by the person making the response. Interiorizing does not take place, as the respondent intrudes his/her own ego, or self, into the interchange.

Instructions on the kinds of responses to avoid leave participants with the impression that interiorizing with respect is a negative process. They ask what things they should be doing. More than one has said, and only partially in jest, "Now you've taken away all my

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responses!" Participants must be encouraged to listen and listen very carefully. It may be suggested that they listen in such a way that they enter the experience and attempt to live it as it happened. In order to return later to the moments of intensity in the experience the listener may make notes of some phrase or words that caught their attention. These brief written notes help the memory. They allow the listener to work back from the earliest significances of the intentional moment. Without this aid, attention tends to be given to the last images or phrases of the presentation, and earlier elements are missed.

Moments of intensity are often related to feelings. A subject may express fear, sorrow, joy and other such emotions through the intentional moment. These can be indicators of moments of intensity and may be the ground of a response, the person making the response using his/her own words. "You felt very happy at that moment because it seemed what happened was important to you," may be an appropriate response in a series of exchanges that helps the listener grasp the significance of what was happening. It may further leave the conversation open for the teller to continue with his/her story, filling in other elements that had been left out of the original. Responses that allow the events to be further recounted can advance the process of interiorization.

Words, and phrases that express feelings then can be helpful. But it should be remembered that emergence of meanings and interiority is not just a matter of getting in touch with feelings. Interiority is much more than this. To stop at focusing upon the person's feeling

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would be to psychologize the experience. Meanings, and the interior life that they generate, are given in the object or terminal matter of intentional consciousness. The mind is involved with the constitution of those meanings, but they do not originate there. Meanings participate in the individual's life, but also transcend it.

The process of interiorization should include the discovery of the meaning of that moment by those who are receiving the moment. The perceived sense of the given moment may be articulated, and offered back to the subject for clarification. As well as helping the group members accurately grasp the meanings of the moment, this process also tends to help enhance or develop meaning in the event. This is not to give new data to the original text, but to work from the experience given to the person in areas that had not had their meanings unhidden.

When the moment has been interiorized those hearing the moment express the conviction of their being more than they were before that process began. The person received exists in a new way, and in-dwells the other more completely. This is the basis of the expression of those who have been a part of Snyder's meanings workshop that their relationships became stronger and their bonding together firmer for having been a part of the meanings unit.

Discovering Connections

For members of the local church the meanings that they live are informed by the traditions, symbols, and images of the Christian tradition. Their interior life consists of more than a community of the family members, teachers, and friends who have had past significance

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for them. It is more too, than the encounters with the world of nature. It includes all these, but integrated into these elements are the stories and other symbols of the faith. For many the most influential of these symbols are the Biblical stories, prayers, and injunctions.

Historically, one of the consistent marks of identification of the Christian religion is the Bible. The complete Scripture is taken as the basis of the faith community's worship through the liturgical year. The Scripture is read as a part of worship, and it is proclaimed in words of witness. The major festivals of the Christian year are founded on the stories of Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, and beginnings of the Christian community. Those who are a part of Christian community hear those stories repeated, hear sermons on them, and so have participated and continue to participate in a process of interiorizing them. The stories come with a meaning for the community and, individually, members of it. They are a part of the whole multiplex of meaning that constitutes the individual's life, and are significant components of that person's inner life.

The next movement of the practice of interiority is therefore to bring into juxtaposition the personal, intentional moment and the Biblical Story. This does not mean to suggest that the meaning of the religious tradition has not in any way played a part in the meaning formation of the intentional moment. These connections are however vague and unclear, and there is no way of bringing them out as discrete entities. Rather, it is the intention of this practice to bring consciously into dialogue these two areas which have been formative of

personal meanings for members of the Christian community.

The individual is asked to keep in mind the meaning or meanings that have emerged from the intentional moment and to discover from the Scriptural tradition a story, prayer or other passage whose meaning seems to be very similar to the meaning of the intentional moment. It is emphasized that the individual makes the selection of the passage. The issue of whether or not this passage embodies a similar meaning to the intentional moment is decided by the group member, it is not the judgment of the leader. At this point the leader merely makes available the resources of the Biblical tradition with which the individual works.

Although there will be aspects of the Storied Moment, that is the Scriptural passage, which do not strongly suggest the meaning of the lived moment, it is possible for the individual to accomplish this task. The choice of passage is not final, and the selection may require reading many passages, and allowing time to sense the meaning. The passages should be compared and tested through a hermeneutical process of reflection and Biblical scholarship, representing the reflection of the community of faith, as necessary to make a selection.

When a passage, or perhaps more than one passage, has been discovered the person reads and re-reads it several times. The intention is for the person to live its meaning in his or her own life. It has been helpful for participants to write responses to some guideline questions that can be shared in the group later. The first task in discovering connections is to take care to discover the meaning in the original context. Some of these questions include, "What is the

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passage about, what is the context of the passage, and what else was happening at the time? The use of Biblical scholarship including critical textual analyses may be used in this exercise. For many people within the local church, however, they may not be available, or written in a way that makes meanings accessible. Persons with some training in this area may respond to questions about the passage in a group setting, if this information is sought, but not available amongst a local church's resources. The person may have to struggle with the passage, and the Christian community's reflection upon it to be able to state what it meant to those who first heard it in its original, and later settings.

Having considered this the person then writes down what makes this passage similar to his/her own lived moment. Where are the connections of intensity and meaning that draw the moments together? Are there particular words that express the similarity? Is there something in the mood or feeling tone of the Storied Moment that binds the lived moment to it? Is there a surge of energy, a conviction, or insight from the passage that reaches across to the lived moment, and, if so, at what part of the passage is it? If it is a narrative, what are the characters going through? How do they feel? There should be an attempt to relive the Storied Moment as it is told, in a way that further interiorizes it. It is lived at this point, rather than studied as a text of literature to be analyzed. Groups giving extended consideration to this part of the practice may wish to make a dramatic or graphic presentation of the passage highlighting the intended meanings. This

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presentation may be as elaborate or as simple as energy, time, and other resources permit.

Although this step has stressed the Biblical material it should be noted that Biblical story and phrase are often incorporated in other forms of literature in the Christian community. They frequently inspire contemporary expressions of the meaning of the Scripture. This meaning is often given by the Scriptural reference's place in a longer text produced at some point in the history of the tradition and the interpretation made of it there. Meditations, prayers, creeds, hymns, and certain litanies often embody selections of Biblical material, and the meanings that material has, or had, for the community. These texts also provide material for the participant to consider in reflection upon his or her intentional moment. For some group members something from this material may be more immediate and relevant than the Bible as a whole.

Enhancing Present Meaning

This movement brings the person back to his/her lived moment, and the affirmation that the meaning of the Bible passage or passages reflects the meanings of the lived moment. This affirmation is possible despite the vastly different world in which the Bible passage is set.

The individual now is concerned with ways in which the meanings of the Biblical lived moment speak to the personal lived moment. This step is concerned with the ways in which the meanings of the personal lived moment are polished, or strengthened by the Storied Moment, and the extent to which it brings to light something from the lived moment which

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had not demanded attention before. In doing this the person should be careful not to put more in the actual lived moment than was a part of the original experience, or the reflection founded upon the data of that experience.

The concrete world remains the reference point for interiority. Although reflection and the constituting faculties of consciousness are aimed at the experience, the world grounds the experience and corrects errant interpretation. The person can respond to his/her, or others' reflections upon the experience by saying, "No, it wasn't like that. It happened this way." Interiority must not be confused with solipsism, or subjectivism. The object of perception still has relevance.

The dialogue between the Biblical moment and the personal moment must be maintained. A dialogue involves intersubjectivity, there is a two way communication. Therefore, this practice of interiority is not content merely with what the Biblical material has to say to the individual, but is also willing to allow the personal moment to speak to the Biblical moment. The person then writes in his/her response what his/her lived moment says to the characters, or the situation described in the Biblical passage. Is there something that these personal meanings, insights or the wisdom gained from the lived moment might say to those in their situation? If there is something to be said, what is it, and how might it be expressed? How does the personal lived moment add to the meaning of the Biblical Story?

This movement of the practice of interiority introduces a hermeneutical principle. Discussing Fuchs, James Robinson describes the

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hermeneutical principle:

> A hermeneutical principle is that with which the text is
> confronted to call forth from it what it has to say. Put
> otherwise, a hermeneutical principle is the "place" where the
> text is to be put if it is to begin to speak.3

The juxtaposition of these two texts, one being the Biblical moment, and

the other the personal lived moment with its similar, if not identical

meaning calls forth a word from the former, and so provides the place

for the Biblical word to speak. The congruence of meanings in the texts

is the hermeneutical principle. Each moment with its meaning quickens,

or enlivens the other, enabling the dialogue of meaning to occur.

The person engaging in the dialogue is made aware by his/her new

insight what meaning has been discovered or refreshed. If a structure

for searching out those meanings becomes necessary, he/she may respond

to the question, "What have I discovered new about the world in which I

live, or the world of the Biblical Moment?" Others may follow, "Have I

learned or re-learned something about myself or about the Holy? When

did I last experience these meanings?"

When the recording of this process is complete a brief prayer,

meditation, or a few lines of blank verse may be written. Alternatively,

graphic art may be used to capture the new meanings discovered, or the

new perspectives that have been gained through the connections between
4
the lived moment and the Storied Moment.

The complete write up is presented to the group. Further time may

be spent on studying the Bible passage, and allowing the connections

to emerge so that they become clear for the group as a whole. When each

person has had the opportunity for this the group moves to the fifth movement.

Shared Communal Actuality of Meaning

The practice of interiority is a creative activity. It creates new community. The intersubjective character of presenting and receiving the rich variety of intentional moments brings a new awareness to a group of people. As each one begins to abide in another, by living the other's experience, there is shared a quality of the human spirit that overcomes deepest tragedy, serenity that comes in the most terrifying situations, and the ability to decide and act in critical times. There are dreams and hopes envisioned but dashed by external events, and the courage to find new purposes in changed circumstances. These qualities are seen embodied in those who share their intentional moment. They are everyday kind of people, most are friends who have known each other for a long time. But they discover new realities together, and the relationships are deepened and community is created.

The same expression of human qualities creates, or enlarges the self. Individuals in the group express that their own lives have been expanded through the group experience. The insight, excitement, surge of energy following new intuitions about the world, themselves, and God ground these expressions.

After sharing in the group members state that they feel good about themselves. The significance of this expression may be questioned. However these expressions are based not merely at the psychological or emotional level, though these are included. The

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expressions are founded on the experience of the individuals being accepted as they are. Many individuals arrive at the group meeting with their text prepared, but when it comes to the point of sharing they state that their moment is not very important, or in some other way are apologetic for it. For some their moments have never been offered to a group of people before, but been kept within their own private thoughts. There is a risk, a vulnerability that accompanies any natural shyness or modesty, as the time comes to present the intentional moment. To have one's own very self accepted and received by others affirms and validates the self, in a way that grants the conviction that "my life has counted." This imparts a sense of confidence, and of empowerment in the present moment and for the future.

This practice does help reclaim interiority. Achieving this adds further to the creative or re-creative dimension of this practice. The newly created realities need to be recognized and consciously affirmed. This is the purpose of this fifth movement, Shared Communal Actuality of Meaning. The form that this takes is decided by the group, considering its composition, and the interests of its members. It may use a type of celebration with each person contributing something that was important to them during the sessions, and what impact they expect this to have in future. The sharing of the insights may be through meditation, or other celebrative form.

Alternatively, the group may have the affirmation of their meanings linked with the life of the local congregation to which they belong. It would be possible to have this associated with the worship or service

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life of the congregation. Whatever form is expressed it is intended to make firm the new insights and perspectives gained through the practice of interiority.

Living Interiority

The final movement of the practice is concerned with maintaining the interior life according to what has been established through this practice. The first five movements suggest a self-contained unit such that, when all members have shared their moments and enhanced the meanings through a dialogue with the Scriptural tradition, the practice of interiority is complete. Interiority is something that needs to be lived in a continuing fashion. It is to be lived or gradually lost. The forces that work to suppress interiority remain a part of the modern world, and continue to distract us from the interior life.

One way in which this style can be maintained is for persons to discover other lived intentional moments. Life consists of more such moments than can be written for the task of sharing in the original group. A number of participants in the group have responded, when asked to write up an intentional moment, "I didn't know which one, there are so many of them." Continuing to write up such moments, in ways that others could live them, and to unhide the meanings of those moments keeps interiority alive and protests its suppression.

The practice of interiority calls for intersubjectivity. The formation of meanings and the formation of the self which are aspects of interiority are bound to intersubjective experience. To live interiority will call for the practice of presence. To be "present" for

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others, implies a willingness to allow others to abide in oneself, and to be available to abide in them. The quality of "spiritual availability," or _disponibilite_, as used by Marcel is brought to mind again. The practice of presence may include persons who have "presence" or "with-ness" denied them. These are the ones who are marginalized by society. But the practice of "presence" also embraces persons closer to our own situation, including those who are a part of our local congregations and communities. This practice protests the functionalization and dehumanization of persons in modern society. Finally, the practice of interiority is directed against systems that crush the possibility of interiority. Systemic aspects of culture which work to crush the interior life, some of which have been indicated above, include the use of language that is detached from concrete experience. In our day "freedom," "democracy," and "patriotism" are examples of language that is often used, and has popular appeal, but whose meaning is not often related to the concrete experience of many persons. Bureaucracies, and other systems that objectify persons, and the emphasis on speed, with its shallowness, are attached to systems that close off the interior life. To live interiority is to take on these systems, to hold out against them and claim the interior life as one's own.

Conclusion

The dissertation has argued that interiority is at risk in the modern world. It is at risk because of a dominant world view that devalues those aspects of human experience that provide its foundation.

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This world view has also influenced the work of theorists of religious education.

A way to rediscover, or renew, the inner life is through an approach to religious education that is concerned with meanings, personal meanings derived from experience of the world, including the person's religious tradition. This has been the argument provided here. Some of the challenges that this task presents have been considered. Amongst these is the issue of keeping interiority alive. This is a continuing concern. No ready-made, complete answer is offered.

What has become apparent, however, is that human experience is laden with the matter of interiority. This matter includes vibrant, intense experiences and an intending toward intelligibility of those experiences that unhides meanings. Out of the conjunction of these elements lives take on a force that defines the person.

Often these foundations of interiority, especially the lived moments, seem inconsequential to the individual. Yet they are the moments that are remembered, and in remembering and reflecting upon them the individual yields significant meanings.

It is the power of both the events of common experience of the concrete world, and the intentionality of consciousness, that suggest the inner life is most resilient. This state of affairs encourages all endeavors aimed at renewing it.

NOTES

Chapter 6

1

    See Appendix C for an example of "Intentional Moment" prepared by a participant in the group work on interiority.

2

    Ross Snyder, "How 'Institute Of Meanings Formation' Differs From 'Telling My Story,'" Photocopy, n.d.

3

    Robinson and Cobb, 53-54.

4

    See Appendix C for an example of "Discovering Connections."

Lived Moment

I don't remember anything else of that Christmas Eve service 32
years ago other than the shaft of enlightenment that penetrated my 16
year-old being as the pastor of our church began his pastoral prayer in
the darkened sanctuary:

"Eternal God, Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and Father of all
children of earth...."

My inner ears perked up. At that time I didn't know why. I only
knew that the pastor hadn't included children specifically in his
prayers before.

I waited through other content, the usual subject matter of such
prayers. I was in a state of expectancy, anticipation. Some inner
sense was saying, "wait, it is coming." And I waited.

    And then he prayed.

"We rejoice in the careful thought and deep devotion of parents, as
they strive to make children happy."

I heard it, but my heart was deadened. I didn't know that at the
time. Those were flat, dull grey steely words for me.

"We remember, too, the affection poured forth by foster parents"

--a flash thought: I wish I had some--and then it dies, like a
rocket flare--

"by those who serve in orphanages, and other institutions dedicated

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to help the young."

I heard it and the altruism that had been developed in me by the steady message of helping others agreed, yes, yes. But _that_ was not the message for me.

"Oh God, we hold before Thee the countless children of the world"

--_this_ was going to be for me--

"as they face life in physical need"

--_that_ was not me; I had plenty--

"sometimes in bewildering uncertainty, sometimes in gross neglect."

I deadened this; I numbed it; I didn't remember hearing it. But it was enough of a self-recognition, enough of a recognition of my true state by another, that I felt known for the first time in my life.

"Use us, in our abundant good fortune, to minister to them."

--oh yes, yes, my heart cried; and then this thought disappeared as rapidly as it had arisen. However, thoughts once articulated never completely disappear; and this proved to be the first time, not the last time for such a cry.

"Help us to search our hearts, to acknowledge before Thee and to ourselves the many times when we are selfish, when we hurt those who are nearest us"

--oh, if only they could hear!--

"and when we live in ways unworthy of those who call Jesus Lord. . . . In this season which is so much better than ordinary days, may we become better and holier and more unselfish people."

--don't I wish they could be.

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This prayer was salvation to me. I grasped at the straw. I uncharacteristically went up to the pastor after the service and asked if it would be possible to have a copy of the prayer. I was nervous. I didn't want him to ask me questions. He obliged me with a copy on Dec. 27 with a note:

"Dear Lois: Here is the prayer you asked for. Naturally, I was highly pleased by your reaction and trust it will bring you further help. Please say hello to the whole family, and put down a "happy New Year" for yourself. Most cordially, Elmer E. Voelkel, Minister."

It was years before I realized that I didn't have to survive abusive parenting anymore. For I _had_ reached adulthood, and I could choose to be responsible for my own happiness. Nonsense and joy and positive intentions were mine for the choosing.

But prior to this prayer, I hadn't realized what was going on. I only knew that night that some new reality had penetrated into my consciousness: "you are one of those being prayed for." And with it, fast on its heels, came the second awareness that "you are not alone. God is with you. And God will always be with you. The night is never so dark that His light cannot find you."

And thus began my pilgrimage, beyond prevenient grace, with God my Father and nurturer and protector and guide and guarantor, with I as one of God's children, for ever and always.

And so also began my preparation to be listener to the unvoiced cried of others and to be available as a healer for others in that darkness, much to my surprise. I've come to know that the crosses each

of us bear are the means by which God may minister to the world, if we are willing to go through them.

How important it is to pray on behalf of children who may not even be able to articulate the prayers they need prayed on their behalf. How important it is to pray for children so that they may be placed in the means of grace to receive the assurance of the presence of God always to them. How important it is for all children to know that they can count on always being valued by God.

* * * * * * *

How precious are the lives of all children.

How blessed are we to have children in our midst.

How fortunate we are that God is ever, always with children
*
    "in places where others cannot reach,"

    bringing them through and ultimately offering healing,

    making possible forgiveness and inviting authentic service

    to Him.

Thanks be to God for God's inexpressible gift. Amen.
*
  from Marjorie Holmes [Participant did not cite specific reference].

Text by Lois McAfee, participant, Meanings Formation Workshop, Wrightwood, Ca.: 1988.

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Appendix B

Who am I?

There are only three distinct memories that I have of nursery school. Each of them clutches on to an event that stands out from the other happenings of those times. On the day I have in mind the class sessions had concluded and all the children prepared to leave. One by one they departed with a parent in tow. Soon I was the only one left. My mother did not come. Now it was just the teacher and I who were left standing by the door of the empty room.

Still mother did not come. I did not know why mother had not come to pick me up this day. But I was certain that she would be there. I don't know how long the teacher and I had been waiting, but eventually she said to me, "Do you want me to stay with you until your mother comes for you, or shall I go?"

"It would be nice to have someone with me," I thought. But then I felt that it was not always best to have what you want. It seemed that the teacher did not want to hang around waiting on one student. She must have had things she wanted to do.

"You go," I said, "I'll wait for mother by myself." And the teacher did leave.

It was a drab, gray day. The sky was gray and overcast, the building was gray and cold. I felt very alone as I stood near the nursery schoolroom. The wall of the room butted onto the wall of

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another bigger building and I sought refuge in the corner. I was uncertain, and afraid of being there alone. Confusion and fear nagged at me. I did not cry—at least I do not recall crying. Beneath the confusion there was still a feeling that mother would come.

The clearest image of this day is that of my mother's arrival. Suddenly she was there. She leaned forward as she approached, arms wide and outstretched. She smiled a wide smile of joy. Her arms enfolded me

Unhiding the Meaning

I live in a world where choices have to be made. The real choices are those in which a cost is involved, whatever the decision. My choice was to stand over against the world, alone. There seemed a sense of rightness about that choice. Not to have stood alone would have been to let the challenge go by. The challenge was to see who I was. It seemed right too, in that it was doing something for another.

The world beyond my understanding and control is frightening and threatening. It might break loose in terror at any time. Yet the world is also nurturing and affirming. It is a place where I am met with love and succored.

Celebration

> To make the choice, yes or no, there's a risk of falling,
> falling into the abyss
> But with the choice I paint myself and am met with
> the power of being.

Text by author, participant, Meanings Formation Workshop, San Rafael, Ca.: July, 1987.

Appendix C

An Intentional Moment

It was the autumn of 1953, in fact it was during the football season for Edinburg [Texas] High School. We had moved from Scranton, Pennsylvania to the Rio Grande valley at Ron's Doctor's urging that we get out of the cold, damp climate of the east central states because of Ron's worsening arthritis.

Edinburg is the county seat in a citrus producing area of southern Texas. (You are familiar, I hope, with the Ruby Red grapefruit produced there.) We bought a partnership in a company called "The Technical Care of Citrus Groves." Edinburg had a 75% Mexican population, which I believe is relevant to my story.

At the time of our move, three of our older children were in school. John and James, the oldest, had been very reluctant to leave their classmates in the Marblehead, Massachusetts, Junior High School where they were football and basketball players and go into the eighth grade of an elementary school in Scranton's 8-4 system.

On a certain morning, I took John to our family doctor because he had hurt his foot the day before at football practice. It was of course late when I dropped him off at school and he was irritated at me, the doctor and the situation.

John did not come home at the usual time after practice or at all that night. Frantic, we notified the police and the followed two weeks

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of the worst time in my life, and of course, Ron's.

What had happened to John? We were only 16 miles from the Mexican border. Had he been kidnapped? Met with foul play? Had he been reprimanded for tardiness at school and just taken off with no direction in mind?

John had a very dark complexion with beautiful long curling lashes. In the short time we had lived in the Valley, he had been mistaken for a Mexican several times. He did not get along very well with the Mexican boys. Remember this was 35 years ago. Had he been in a fight? He had a very short fuse and in Massachusetts had been called "Pepper-Pot" by a neighbor.

We began a nation-wide search. There was a police alert. Ads were placed in our newspapers. I wrote to all the Salvation Army centers in big cities in the U.S. Our hopes were raised, then dashed, by sightings that led nowhere. A Dallas resident did call to state that he had given a ride to a boy answering to that description. The boy had told him that he was on his way to California and that his parents had been killed in an automobile accident. We agonized over this. Had this been wishful thinking? After all, we were adoptive parents.

We had been childless after seven years of marriage though Ron travelled a lot and the separation of the war years had occurred. We decided to have tests made and were told that pregnancy was not impossible but improbable due to a low sperm count. At his doctor's suggestion, Ron had his tonsils removed and took Antuitrin S. But we were impatient and upon learning that five-year old boys were up for

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adoption we started to investigate. While we were permitted to see the boys, we found that they were six and would be seven in two months. Having once seen these adorable boys, we went ahead.

The boys seemed to adjust very well considering that they had been in three foster homes and that in the first one they had supposed that their foster parents were their real parents.

Jim could throw no light on his brother's disappearance, nor could any of their classmates. As the days dragged on we felt more and more devastated but still hopeful. We had joined the Southern Presbyterian Church and attended regularly as a family. Ron, as always, sang in the choir and the children attended Sunday School. Friends and neighbors rallied around though we were Yankees and had been in Edinburg only five months.

There seemed to be no problems when our two natural babies arrived. I had become pregnant two months after the adoption papers became finalized. Counseling in those days was practically unheard of and seemingly not indicated anyhow. And so in the midst of this apparently happy family a bomb had exploded.

At the end of two weeks, we received a phone call from our minister in Scranton, Pennsylvania, that John was there. He had been picked up on the streets because of the 9 p.m. curfew. When questioned as to whom he might know there, he had given Dr Peter Emmon's name. Dr Emmons had taken John to the home of his assistant minister who had a young family.

Ron and I left immediately that Sunday afternoon and by driving night and day reached Scranton on Tuesday and were reunited with a very

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quiet John. All the way back to Texas I wondered if at every stop John might try to leave us, but he did not.

Although this is not the end of the story, I am limiting it to this one experience. It caused a lot of soul-searching on my part, questioning whether or not I had been a good mother. It shook my confidence because I had thought that because of my mature age I would be an especially good parent.

I would say that I never lost hope or faith that God would bring John back to us. It was a shattering experience but I am sure that it made me a stronger person, able with God's help to bear adversities which would come later, as they do to us all.

I am afraid that in today's world the outcome of this story would have been tragic. As it was, John's life has been bumpy.

To borrow a commercial for an upcoming program: "The Story of the American Experience is the amazing resources of the human spirit in overcoming adversity." I would like to add the words of my exercise instructor which have helped me every morning for nearly seven years. "The thing is—you can't give up. I know how it is sometimes. We lose loved ones, and so your life changes dramatically and I know how it is. Parents pass away and so forth. Hey! This is our moment of light in this world and we've just got to—in a sense—not give up on ourselves. You are a very attractive nice lady and you want to keep it together as long as possible. Right?"

Discovering Connections

With the meaning of my "lived moment" in mind, I found my story in

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two different Bible stories, one in the Old Testament, Genesis 37, and one in the New, Luke 15: 20 - 32.

In both instances I wish to place emphases on the feelings and reactions of two fathers, Jacob and the unnamed father of the prodigal son. Jacob showed favoritism toward Joseph, the seventeen-year-old son by his wife Rachel. The other sons, by Leah and two servants of Rachel were jealous to the point of plotting to get rid of Joseph. The oldest of the brothers planned to save Joseph but while he was away the brothers sold the boy to traders who were on their way to Egypt. "We found this in the field," they told their Father, showing him Joseph's coat on which they had spattered goat's blood. "Yes," he sobbed, "It is my son's coat. A wild animal has eaten him. Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces." Then Israel tore his garments and put on sackcloth and mourned for his son in deepest mourning for many weeks. His family all tried to comfort him, but it was no use. "I will die in mourning for my son," he would say, and then break down and cry. But God had plans for Joseph!

It is the grief of Jacob that reminds me of my "lived moment." The story does not mention whether Jacob ever questioned his treatment of Joseph as a favorite, but he had no reason to suspect that his other sons were the cause of Joseph's disappearance. "Despair" and "anguish" describe Jacob's feelings. Jealousy carried to the extreme describes the feelings of the brothers. In my "moment" I did question whether or not I had favored one twin over the other, or the younger children over the twins. Probably John did feel jealousy, but even to this day when

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something is bothering him he has to go off and be alone.

And now to the other father at the time of his son's homecoming: "But his Father said to the slaves, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. And a jewelled ring for his finger, and shoes! And kill the calf we have in the fattening pen. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has returned to life. He was lost and is found!' So the party began." We did not celebrate John's return. We were relieved and happy but the exhaustion of the two weeks and the hurried trip to Pennsylvania took its toll with feelings almost of resentment as to what we had been put through. John did have a great home-coming party put on by a girl-friend and his peers.

This story does not mention the feelings of the father when his younger son left home with his inheritance, but his joy at the return was so great that he must have had moments of great longing to see his son and perhaps some questioning as to whether anything had happened in his treatment of this son to make him want to leave his family.

My lived moment would say to both fathers, "Have hope. Don't despair. Trust in God." But it also says to me and to the second Father, "Be more appreciative of the child who does live within the family guidelines." Tell him that you love him and that he is a comfort to you. I failed to do this.

In reliving my experience over these last two weeks, I see life as a series of crises, small and large. I believe that in the 34 years since my "moment" I have gained some insight into ways to respond to those crises and to express the feelings of my heart. From something

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those crises and to express the feelings of my heart. From something
which I read, I learned to say to Ron every once in a while, "Have I
told you today how much I love you?"

A Prayer

Our Father, I rejoice in the happy ending to my story and that of
the two Fathers of so long ago. You have given me insight into my
behavior which I wish I had years ago. Forgive me for not giving my
lost child a celebration and not surrounding him with expressions of
love and caring. Since I cannot undo what was not done, give me
guidance in my remaining years to show my 50 year-old twin sons how much
I do love them. Forgive me for using my mind in place of my heart, so
that I will not carry the guilt that reliving this "moment" is making
me feel. May there be something constructive in future relationships
with the twins that will have made this whole exercise valuable.

Text by Marjorie Edgerly, participant, Workshop on Interiority,
Wrightwood, Ca.: October, 1988.

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